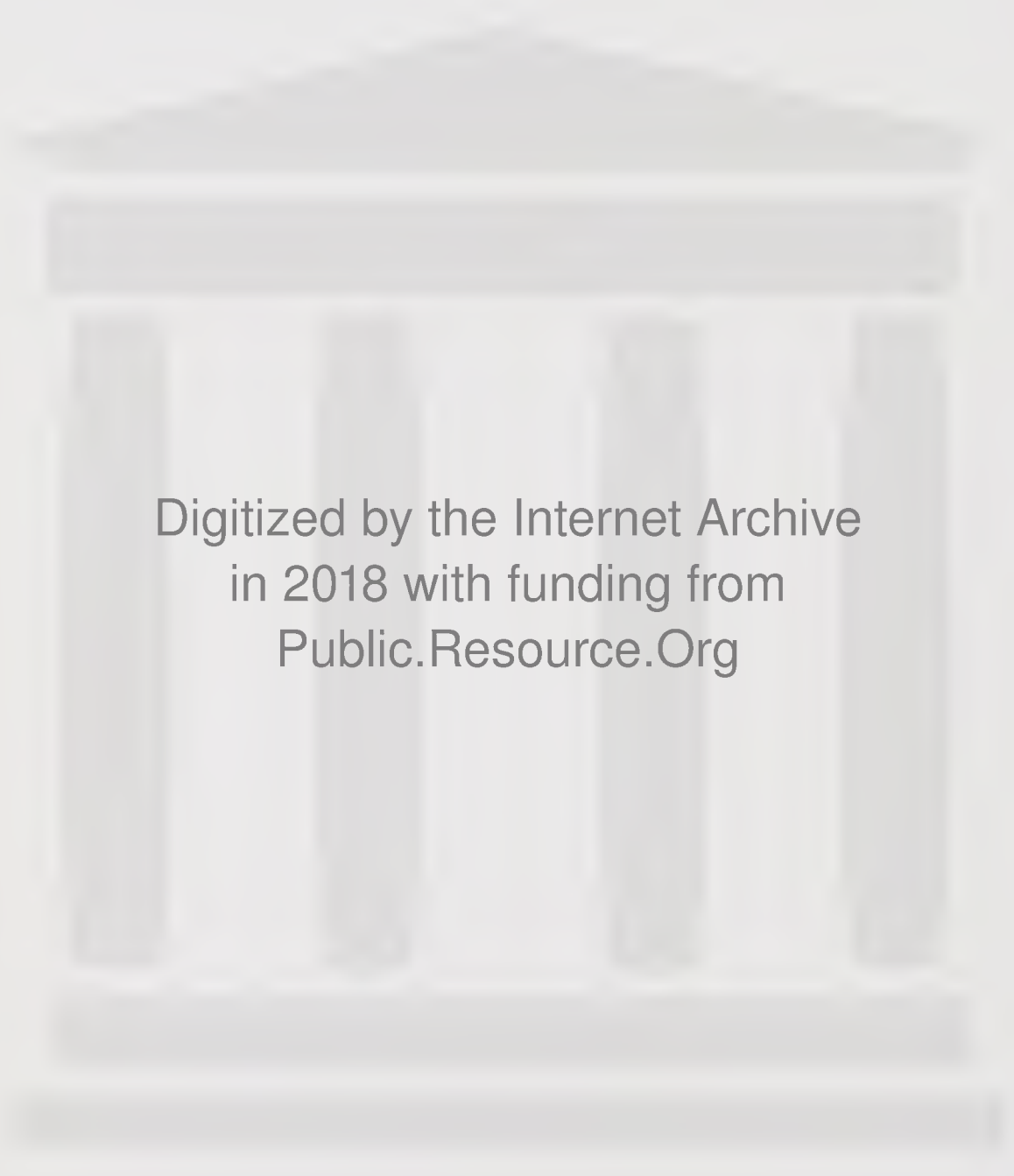


C. SUBRAMANIA BHARATI



S. Vijaya Bharati



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*To my mother
Thangammal
Who was to me the living embodiment
Of all Bharati's poetry.*

Preface

Bharati has been raised to the status of a national poet; his writings have come to be honoured as national literature. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. When a poet gains recognition as the poet of the people it is often found that his poetry loses part of its appeal and on account of wide interpretations is apt to be misjudged. When literature becomes the property of the common man, it is not often that its noble qualities are preserved. This is most true in the case of Bharati who has partly suffered from the raging interest that swept across this country after its independence. He was at once upheld as the poet of freedom, as the poet of the renaissance in Tamil literature, as the poet of a new era, of a new generation and as a poet *nonpareil*. The common man to whom the pleasures of literature were now democratically available sang happily through the streets some of the best lyrics of Bharati, and he had little thought of preserving the literary value of this popular poet. This perhaps accounts for there being neither a scholarly edition nor a proper criticism of Bharati's works till this very day.

Another mixture of advantage and disadvantage that Bharati seems to have suffered or enjoyed in recent years is the existence in flesh and blood of a large number of friends who had known him in actual life, and very close relatives. Bharati's own brother is alive and active spreading the message of his prophetic elder brother. One of his daughters is alive too, almost in the front rank of sympathetic critics and biographers of the poet. The writer of these words has again the mixed blessings of being a granddaughter of the poet. The advantage of having so many people with living memories is that it is easily possible to get at the origin of

many of the poems. It is possible to get at every part of the life of Bharati with a fairly accurate biographical knowledge. The disadvantage is, people often have poor memories; sometimes imaginative brains. In the absence of documentary evidence we have to take into account what various people say about Bharati's life and work. This is a difficulty felt in the case of all writers who are contemporary enough for our consideration, too contemporary, in fact. It may be remembered that writers like T. S. Eliot, W. Somerset Maugham and Robert Frost have undergone the same ordeal. In our own country, the names of Sarojini Naidu and Rabindranath Tagore will be remembered in this context. An attempt has been made in this book to weigh all available material on the biography and works of Bharati, taking into final consideration only what is most reliable on the basis of this research. It is amusing to note that Bharati is as elusive as Shakespeare in the matter of documentary research.

Bharati as a poet has to be studied primarily with the historical context in mind. Bharati's times were troubled times. Everywhere in the country there was during his times unrest and a rising upheaval against the British. Much of what Bharati wrote was inspired by the passion for freedom characterised in so many other patriots in so many different forms. To him freedom was the very breath of life. His art, in so far as it kindled passion in a fellow-Indian, making him take up arms against the British, had purpose. Bharati's poetry was most truly a product of his times.

A poet, if he is to continue to be read, has to conquer temporal assessments and be universal. This does not mean that the poet does not reflect his age. On the contrary, a poet is capable of presenting a wholeness, and within that entirety of presenting the characteristics of his age and society. If his voice is not related to all time, then there will be no sense of tradition in literature. A study of the literary traditions in a country reveals that a poet presents a limitless experience in its wholeness and distils the emotions of his poetic heart. Bharati was a poet with his roots in the distant past, affected by changes in his own times, who saw in a clear vision the

horizon of far away future. It is because the poet firmly had his roots also in the present that he was recognised as a revolutionary and a poet of the new generation.

The poet's personality is related to the sharp turnings in the life of a society. Bharati quotes Mazzini and speaks about the artistic fruition in a country :

The Italian Philosopher Mazzini says that there are two kinds of true art. At the end or the beginning of an epoch true artistic fruition takes place. Generally, when the people of a nation have a sense of true enthusiasm, heroism or fame there is the birth of great art. In periods of depression in a country it is likely that sages may be born to redeem the nation; but artistic development is very unlikely in such a place at such a time.

Bharati speaks of his own times in the light of what Mazzini says :

We have lost our prowess, our heroism; we have no land, no kingdom; we do not have our own rulers; will the Goddess of Knowledge Saraswati be born here?

He indicates that this country is not ripe for an artistic fruition. Yet "in times of destruction or depression, sages are born in a country". Bharati may be considered such a sage, such a magnificent personality. At a time of slavery when our people were, without heroism and dignity, when they were depressed and unhappy, Bharati was born to give them hope and enlightenment.

Bharati's life is a sweet poem. It is a collection of the experiences of his personality whose important aspects are extreme love, happiness, strength, righteousness, novelty and attraction. Bharati's poetry is an expression of these experiences.

- S. Vijaya Bharati

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A POET IS BORN

A Man's personality is formed by the qualities of his ancestors, his birth-place and the surroundings in which he is brought up. Bharati was born in Ettayapuram, in South India, a place well-known for the great arts of poetry and music. Its fame had spread through the southern part of India, and Tamil scholars and musicians lined up to seek patronage in the court of Ettayapuram.

Bharati's father Chinnasamy Iyer, was an erudite Tamil scholar and skilled in modern engineering and mathematics. He had tremendous influence in the court of the Maharaja, and so Bharati was able to mingle with the scholars at the court. Bharati has described in his *Chinna Sankaran Kathai*, how he was influenced by the Ettayapuram court. Though Bharati was a born-poet and gifted with the qualities of a genius, he learnt the nuances of Tamil language and poetry through his association with the Tamil scholars of the court of Ettayapuram. The title 'Bharati', a name of the Goddess of Knowledge, was conferred upon him at the age of eleven by the court, in approval of his ability to compose poems on any subject, at any moment. He surprised even older poets of his generation with his readiness to compose.

Bharati's biographies point out that he wrote poetry at an early age. His father wanted him to train in engineering and mathematics, and tried to give him an English education. He put him in the Anglo-Vernacular School at Ettayapuram; but Bharati hated English school education and was for ever day-dreaming and writing poetry in Tamil. A genius by birth contradicts common opinions of what a regular education is. Bharati sings of Saraswati as keeping him company in his youth and bringing poetry to him in the caresses of the breeze. It is but natural that his mind was

distracted from bookish learning. Bharati's wife, Chellammal, relates how fond he was of 'dreaming enchanting day-dreams'.

Bharati could not concentrate on his studies. Even when he was seven or eight years old he had dreams of an enchanting nature and started writing poems of love and romance... Even as a child he used to sit with many older men and discuss philosophical matters.

At the age of seven, poetry sprang from his voice. When he was eleven he wrote in such a way that even learned men praised him. The title then conferred on him as Bharati adds lustre to his name. Bharati was not educated in a scholastic tradition, says poet Suddhananda Bharati. Somasundara Bharati, a friend of Bharati, notes :

I happen to know very well how Bharati's father was greatly complimented on his son's talents in poetry. I have been with Bharati in his eighth and ninth years when he could sing on a given proposition with careless ease, and surprise many older scholars and poets. I had laughed at the tales about Kali writing on Kalidasa's tongue, of Kamban's power of writing and of the tales narrating how Kumaraguruparar composed poetry when he was hardly five years old. But when I saw Bharati writing effortlessly at the age of seven, I realised that these stories must be true, and that the gift of writing poetry comes to a person not through scholarship but through some power at birth. When at the age of eleven he composed poems on lines given by various Tamil scholars in an assembly of learned men, he was awarded the title of 'Bharati' by the admiring scholars.

The experience that belongs to very much older men was revealed in the nature of young Bharati. He was a member of the society of scholars when they gave out inaugural readings of their works. He gave his opinions without flinching. In his youth he enjoyed the friendship of great scholars and the patronage of the State and lived very happily, says Va. Ra. (V. Ramaswamy), one of the poet's close friends, of Bharati's early life.

Bharati was mature in mind, proficient in the language and had great talent for poetry. He had the poet's love of solitude and nature, pleasure in composing poetry, sweet sense of rhythm and love of learning. Bharati's passion for wisdom and desire for learning are indicated in his poem, on Saraswati :

I was bewitched by her womanhood when I was merely a boy; though the mind could no longer dwell on studies at school, her face blossomed before me as she sat on white flowers carrying a veena. I looked at her, and perceived the secret of all learning and lost my heart to her.

Later, on the river-bank, as he sat in a solitary dome and enjoyed the southerly breeze, she brought to him virgin poetry. His youth was gifted with Nature's silence, the joyous experience of the southerly breeze, and filled with day-dreams. This lasted till he became twenty-two and his attention was turned later towards other things which he considered as important as learning and poetry.

Bharati developed a fear for death later in his life. He had seen two deaths in his immediate family, one at the age of five when his mother died, and the other at the age of sixteen when his father passed away. He used to yearn for the love of his mother, and later he treated all women with filial affection and considered them the embodiment of Mother Shakti. He loved to use the word mother quite often in his poems. Though he had enough of maternal love from his stepmother, it never really substituted for him the love of his mother that might have been. Bharati had a large number of relatives both on his paternal and maternal sides, and enjoyed the company of the scholars in the State, and so he spent his youth quite happily writing poetry. Naturally, most of his early poetry reflects this contentment with life.

The father influenced the son in more ways than one. Though Chinnasamy Iyer wanted his son to be English-educated, he was very proud of his son's ability as a poet and Tamil scholar. He never encouraged him directly in this direction, but Bharati knew that his father loved Tamil poetry. He sent his son to the Hindu

College High School at Tirunelveli for studies which cost a fortune in those days. Bharati refers to this in his autobiography saying that, in spite of spending a thousand rupees for his studies, he achieved nothing except evil attendant on an English education.

Most of Bharati's qualities were developed from his father, his straight-forwardness and strong belief in truth, for example. He developed his father's anger as well. The son also inherited the father's intelligence and innocence. In addition to these qualities, Chinnasamy Iyer's experience of life influenced Bharati a great deal. Bharati never realised the importance of money until his father lost all his money in the cotton industry, and died.

Bharati was married at the age of fifteen to Chellammal, a beautiful girl of seven. The ceremony was a big event and took place for four days. Bharati sang love songs of Annamalai Reddiar at the wedding, admiring his wife's beauty and asking her for her love. Chellammal, the shy and modest bride, knew even at that age that her husband was an extraordinary person and was indeed very proud of him.

Chellammal was a source of inspiration for Bharati later in life, and he sings adoring her in many poems which express the heights of his *advaitic* experience. Though Chellammal was fortunate to have a husband like Bharati, many were her sufferings on account of his political life and his experimentation of ideals in actual life. For example, when Bharati was concerned about freedom for women, he used to experiment them at home with his wife and daughters; his elder daughter, under his supervision, used to open the front door for his young friends asking them to come in, and fulfil functions of hospitality, offering them water to wash their feet, and so on. This was not normal social practice in any village in those days, and Bharati's family encountered many difficulties on account of such uncommon behaviour.

The year after his marriage, Bharati's father died, and this came as a great blow to him. He was greatly influenced by this sorrowful experience, as his father's death was due to psychological

reasons for his losing money in the cotton industry. Bharati sings and insists elsewhere that making money is the first duty for those who do not have money. But he would never let money overpower a man's natural character. Later on in life, Bharati was not attached to money, though he had the necessity to earn a living as much as anyone else. He was of a very generous nature, and gave off everything he had to the needy. This was a direct result of the experience of his father's death.

Bharati studied in the Hindu College High School for three years till he completed the fifth form, and continued his education in Varanasi, living with his aunt. Krishna Sivan, Bharati's uncle owned the Sivamadam in Varanasi, and lived a peaceful life of hosting pilgrims who came to the city from various parts of the country.

Varanasi was a place which suited Bharati's poetic personality and he enjoyed his stay there very much. The river Ganges occupied Bharati's poetic dreams, and he spent almost all his leisure out of school in gazing on her beauty.

Bharati used to lose himself in the beauty of the river. It was the greatest of natural sights and created in him a glorious experience of spiritual beauty. At the same time, as a patriot, Ganges, besides being a poetical sight, became for him a symbol of the age-long culture and civilisation of India, an instrument bearing the weight of history and the form carrying the spiritual power of this country. Thus Ganges was the river of virtue, infused with extraordinary spiritual power :

The Ganges of the holy and sweet water is our river :

Is there anything to compare with her glory?

Bharati regards the Ganges, as one of the ten limbs of Bharata Devi and says that the holy water of the river adds strength like nectar to the soil, puts life into the earth and mixes the culture and *dharma*, born out of spirituality, with the soil :

The Ganges has come down from Heaven growing gold and *dharma* all along the path of her descent.

Bharati must have stayed in Varanasi for two or three years (from 1898 to 1901). He had to learn both Sanskrit and Hindi in addition to English to pass the Allahabad University entrance examination. Bharati spoke Hindi as fluently as a native speaker and became conversant in many languages later in life, such as French, Bengali, Urdu and the Dravidian languages, Telugu and Malayalam. He used to dress like north-Indian, with a moustache, a short-cut hair, a long coat and a turban. This is the most popular of his portraits that have come down to us.

Bharati returned to Ettayapuram at the invitation of the Maharaja, when the latter came to attend a meeting in Delhi. The Maharaja visited Varanasi on his way back to Ettayapuram, and asked Bharati to come and serve in his court. Bharati's job entailed being with the *Maharaja*: entertaining him by reading newspapers and discussing literature with the patron. During this period, he read Tamil literature and formed a group of friends to enjoy the beauty of Sheller's poetry. This was called the "Shelleyan' Guild" and as a mark of his admiration for the English poet Bharati called himself "Sheller Dasan," and wrote under that pseudonym.

The free-spirited Bharati could not continue in his service to the Maharaja as it was impossible for him to bear with some of the courtly customs. Bharati wrote about his experiences in the Maharaja's court in *Chinna Sankaran Kathai*.

From August 1, 1904, Bharati took the job as a Tamil pandit, with a monthly salary of 17 1/2 rupees in Sethupati High School, Madurai. This lasted till November 10, 1904, and his career as a journalist started after that in the "*Swadesamitran*" office in Madras. There is some controversy, about how Bharati joined "*Swadesamitran*". When Bharati was working as a Tamil teacher, G. Subramania Iyer the editor of "*Swadesamitran*" came to Madurai; he recognised Bharati's genius and asked him to come to Madras. Bharati resigned his job and went to Madras. Another

version of the incident is that Bharati wrote to Lakshmana Iyer who was a distant relative of Bharati and the Vice-Principal of the Training College in Madras, as his temporary job as a Tamil pandit was coming to an end, and Lakshmana Iyer got him the job as sub-editor in "*Swadesamitran*". Yet another version is that Bharati asked a colleague, Ayyasamy Iyer, about the possibility of a job, as his present job then was temporary, and Ayyasamy Iyer's uncle Rajarama Iyer who was a correspondent for the "*Hindu*", recommended Bharati to the sub-editor's position in "*Swadesamitran*". In any case, Bharati entered the field of journalism, the chosen career of the rest of his brilliant life.

Bharati assumed the sub-editorship of "*Swadesamitran*" towards the end of November, 1904. This was the kind of work Bharati had always wanted to do; free, intellectual, suited to his character, a channel for his writing talent, and a service for the nation, at this critical time in the nation's history.

A YOUNG PATRIOT

A Great many years of Bharati's life were spent in the field of journalism now experimenting and now adventuring. Bharati began his career as a journalist, as sub-editor in '*Swadesamitran*' in November, 1904. He began his work primarily as a translator rather than as a creative writer. The translations that Bharati did from English to Tamil made him proficient in both the languages and enabled him, in addition, to form a unique style of his own in Tamil. A study of the development of Bharati's prose will never be complete without a close study and detailed analysis of his translated work from English to Tamil in various journals.

Though the job of sub-editor helped Bharati to be aware of the richness of the Tamil language, he was not completely satisfied with it, since he was never allowed to write an editorial of the newspaper or essays of his own, chiefly due to his pronounced anti-British feeling. Simultaneously, however, he was editor of the monthly "*Chakravartini*" published by the "*Swadesamitran*" office, where some scope existed for writing on everyday politics.

During this period, Bharati lived in Thambu Chetty Street in Madras, and had an office in Armenian Street. He had many good friends at this time; to name a few, S. Duraisamy Iyer, V. Chakkarai Chettiar, Paul, Jayaram Naidu and C.S. Ragunatha Rao. All his friends met regularly in the High Court beach, and thrashed out various problems then facing the country.

During this time, Bharati was very much involved in politics, and wrote prolifically. He composed and sang a poem, praising Bengal in a beach meeting, and published the same in '*Swadesamitran*' on September 15, 1905. In the year 1905, Bengal

was partitioned, and this affected the Indian National Congress very badly. Bharati went to Varanasi for the Congress meeting in 1905. On his way back to Madras, he passed through Calcutta, where he met Sister Nivedita, the disciple of Vivekananda, in Dum Dum.

Bharati dedicated his national poems later to Sister Nivedita, whom he considered his guru. His meeting with her brought about many changes in his personality. He was greatly attracted to her rare vigour, force of love and strength of wisdom. Her very appearance reflected her inner light. Bharati sings in adoration of Sister Nivedita :

An offering to grace, a temple of love
As a sun that dispels the darkness in my heart,
As benevolent rain to my thirsty land,
As unbounded wealth to the destitute,
As a burning flame to the bondage of slavery,
Exists Mother Nivedita, at whose feet,
I bow in adoration.

She was the artistic spirit unifying Bharati's emotions, stray and confused in the beginning. Sister Nivedita's external appearance was a true reflection of her inner harmony. Her soul, full of the sparks of a raging fire, was capable of stringing Bharati's emotions into a thread of unity and order. The power of her love attracted the being coming into contact with it, ultimately transforming it into Love itself. The great wave of love in Sister Nivedita's heart, without need for words or long association, filled Bharati's heart as an instrument of great power. As hearts came near, the one put order into the other's inner faculties. The spirit of love concealed within was kindled into a raging flame. Bharati speaks of this unusual experience in his dedicatory lines to Nivedita :

As Lord Krishna revealed his mighty form to Arjuna and explained the state of *Atman*, the Guru showed me the form of Bharat Matha in its completeness and taught me to love my country. I dedicate this slender volume at the flowery feet of my guru.

I dedicate this book to Srimathi Nivedita Devi, the spiritual offspring of Bhagwan Vivekananda, the most excellent of all spiritual teachers. She taught me the nature of true service to the Mother, and the greatness of asceticism-all this through unspoken wisdom.

Bharati refers to a vision of the complete form of Bharat Matha, Mother India, saying that the clarity of the heart endowed upon him by Nivedita presented this happy vision. The sequence of time in which the vision revealed itself is brief. And this is why, leaving aside the powerful influences of Tilak and many other political personalities, Bharati regards Nivedita his preceptor; hence the dedication.

Bharati compares his vision of Mother India to the mighty form of Lord Krishna revealed to Arjuna. Krishna's form makes Arjuna realise his own self. Nivedita's presentation of the vision of Mother India reveals the mighty form of the Mother Bharati. He realises the nature of true service and the glory of the ascetic way of life. In his national songs, we find this picture of the Mother imprinted firmly on the emotional screen of the poet's personality, presented from a variety of angles.

Nivedita's teaching of Bharati by silence is comparable in our legends only to the silent teaching of Lord Dakshinamurthy, the silent preceptor. Bharati visualises Mother India as Mother Shakti. His experience of Mother Shakti is fascinating. The vision is the same; but the experience of it varies. The completeness of his vision had earned for his national poems the reputed title, "Desopanishad", comparing the poems with the Upanishadic wisdom of ancient India.

Bharati's meeting with Nivedita also influenced him to fight later for the freedom and equality of women of our country. Bharati's idea of freedom for women is born on the basis of a spiritual realisation :

Freedom for woman is based on a realisation of the self. Men and women are equal and as long as they do not harm each other they have the liberty to act according to their will and pleasure.

Bharati says that man's duty in society is to protect the woman and to act as a hedge around her. His ten commandments about the freedom of women are :

1. Girls must not be married off before attaining the age of puberty.
2. They must not be compelled to marry a man whom they do not fancy.
3. Even after marriage she should have the freedom to live apart from her husband; she shall not be put to shame on this score.
4. Girls must get an equal share in ancestral property.
5. After the husband's death women must be allowed to re-marry.
6. Women who would prefer to remain spinsters must be allowed to do so, provided they are able to earn a living independently.
7. The condition laid on women that they must not speak to or associate with men other than their husbands must be removed, as this is born out of fear and jealousy.
8. Women, like men, must be allowed the advantages of higher education in all the branches of knowledge.
9. If they are qualified to employ themselves in any government jobs, this must not be prevented by law.
10. There is now no use to plead for women's rights in the government as even men in the country do not have it. However, if the country were to become independent soon, women must be given a share in the government as men.

Bharati came back to Madras vigorously determined to fight for India's freedom. To add to his enthusiasm, a weekly magazine "*India*" had been started by Thirumalachariar. This was the beginning of an era of originality, individuality, experimentation and novelty for the journalist Bharati. "*India*" magazine was published from 34, Broadway, Madras, till September, 1908, when,

due to governmental interference, publication ceased. The legal editor of "*India*", M. Srinivasan was arrested and imprisoned for five years, and Bharati escaped to the French territory of Pondicherry. "*India*" magazine was resumed from October 20 of the same year, from Pondicherry. Though Bharati was the editor of "*India*", he continued as sub-editor of "*Swadesamitran*" and many of his poems and essays appeared in "*Swadesamitran*" during the same period as his editorial work for the "*India*" magazine.

An important event in the history of the Indian freedom movement was the meeting of the Congress in Surat. In the Congress held in 1906 at Calcutta, many differences existed between the moderates and the extremists. Dadabhai Naoroji managed to control the situation but the following year, when the Congress met again in Surat, the extremists decided to take over. Bharati patronised the extremists, and planned to lead the extremist delegates from Madras. He gave notice to the Congress nationalist delegates who wished to attend the Congress, announcing the dates of departure of the two groups, leaving Madras for Surat. V.O. Chidambaram Pillai and Mandayam Srinivasachariar came to his assistance and the young extremists went to Surat to attend the Congress. The Congress ended in disarray, when Rash Bihari Ghosh of the Old Party was nominated for Presidency, and Tilak, the extremist leader, objected to it.

After his participation in the Surat Congress, Bharati was fascinated by Lokamanya Tilak's heroic appearance and striking eloquence. He expressed the burning passion in his patriotic heart by translating a lecture of Lokamanya Tilak, entitled *The Tenets of the New Party* (published 1908) and a pamphlet of his own experiences in Surat Congress entitled *Our Congress Tour*.

Bharati said of Tilak :

Those who are determined to serve this land until death speak the name of Tilak as the *Saivites* speak the name of *Namasivaya*.

He thought that Tilak dispelled the darkness of ignorance and blew on the conch of learning to kindle the flames of patriotism:

He built a fortress strong with learning
And fortified it with ideas, as impassable depths of water,
He built therein the temple of clear words,
And hoisted the flag of liberty,
May Tilak's name be blessed.

Bharati never liked the Old Party, and expressed his feelings about them in his satirical poems. He was against Dadabhai Naoroji who believed in writing appeals to the Parliament, and officials of the Government, but getting nothing out of them. Later, in 1917, Bharati wrote in "*Swadesamitran*" about Dadabhai Naoroji, when he died at the age of 92, praising him for his strength of will and faith in God. He praised him in a poem on his 80th birthday (1905) though he disbelieved in his methods of achieving freedom for India:

You possess knowledge of learning and likewise kindliness.
And equal to kindliness,
You possess an uncommon creativity and heroism.
Still instead of fighting with arms
You battle with words, as a true sage who has dedicated
himself to the cause of others.

Every small event in the political history of India during the freedom struggle came to Bharati's notice, and he wrote his own commentary about it in "*Swadesamitran*" or "*India*". The partition of Bengal, the differences between the two parties, the visit of the Prince of Wales to India in the year 1906, Swami Abhedananda's visit to Madras and Lajpat Rai's exile from India are some of the events on which Bharati published poems and articles in his magazines.

While Bharati was so very much involved in politics, his poetic talent improved as well. He began publishing his poetry in 1904. His poems were of unusual poetic quality and full of patriotic fervour. He published three of his poems as a pamphlet with V. Krishnasami Iyer's help. In 1907, Krishnasami Iyer sent all the fifteen thousand copies as free gifts to schools and institutions in the Presidency of Madras.

Bharati wrote an appeal to Tamil scholars through "*Swadesamitran*" asking them to find out poems from Tamil literature which praised India or to send their own poems about India. He intended to publish poems with national fervour written in different times both in English and Tamil by different scholars. He was disappointed when he could not get hold of any poetry of this description. Then he began writing his own songs, and published them in book form in 1908 entitled, *Swadesha Githangal*. *Ghana Ratham*, an example of Bharati's wonderful prose, was published in "*India*" magazine every week, as a serial fiction.

In the meantime, the control of the British Government over Indian political leaders became unbearable. In 1908, Tilak was sent to Mandalay, imprisoned for six years. V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, who started a national navigation company in South India, was arrested when he went to see collector Wynch of the Tirunelveli district; he was sentenced to forty years' imprisonment and Subramanya Siva who was a young extremist was imprisoned for ten years. Bharati wrote two poems in which the conversation between collector Wynch and V.O. Chidambaram Pillai is described in beautiful clarity.

It is not surprising therefore that soon a warrant was waiting at the door of the "*India*" office for the arrest of the editor of the magazine. The legal editor, M.Srinivasan, was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison. It was because of this worsening of situation that Bharati decided to go away to Pondicherry, a French territory at that time, and continue to publish the "*India*" magazine.

The most profitable years of Bharati's life were the ten years he spent in Pondicherry. Bharati, the poet and philosopher, flourished through the most difficult but wonderful years in Pondicherry. In Pondicherry, the then foreign soil and this Indian national poet, it seems, blossomed into a philosopher and a saint.

ADVENTURES IN JOURNALISM

At the age of twenty-seven Bharati was in Pondicherry, a charming, energetic and flourishing youth. Bharati was a handsome person; thin and fair, with powerful eyes, a broad forehead and a pointed nose, he was indeed good-looking. His wife describes Bharati's complexion as 'golden'. Va. Ra. remarks on Bharati's physical appearance :

Bharati was a handsome man, fair in complexion, a little taller than five foot six, his nose was particularly pretty, the nose was carved out becomingly on his face. Bharati's nose was chiselled out beautifully without a trace of ugliness through its length. Bharati's eyes were red-lined like the lotus flower. The eyes that were the centre of the face flowed like two balls of fire. It never satiated one to look at them. Bharati had a broad forehead and a moustache kept in trim. It was not the pricking variety of Kaiser's moustache. It grew of its own accord and appeared to smile with great joy and pride.

Suddhananda Bharati saw Bharati, and was bewitched by his appearance. He describes :

His courageous face as appears to me now seemed to sparkle like a tower, and to tell one to be fearless and without shame. The flaming eyes gleam before me now—the eyes that were full of wisdom and courage. His moustache, unlike Kaiser's stood up like a tongue of flame.

Such descriptions, help us link Bharati's physical personality with his inner personality. A poet's inner personality, in spite of his physical appearance, speech and action all marks of an outer or visible personality, remains invisible. The relationship between

aspects of visible, outer personality, and the invisible, inner personality, remains open to discussion. A man's inner and outer personalities by definition, may appear to be at variance with each other. It is common experience that a wicked man may bear happy appearance and a righteous person may have an ugly exterior. This disparity in the inner and outer personalities is of one kind, complete harmony between the inner and outer personalities is a different matter. Very few people are blessed with a complete harmony in their personalities. Bharati belongs to this class of rare and out-of-the-ordinary people.

It is known to us from his many friends that Bharati's exterior was as handsome as his inner, harmonious personality. His poetry too reveals the harmonious blending of the inner and outer personalities. In Tamil poetic tradition it is held possible to determine the inner workings of a man through his external appearance. The outer in some measure reflects the inner form :

As the marble reflects a near object
So does the face reveals a bitter heart,
The eye reveals friendship and enmity,
If you can read its language,

says *Thirukkural*. The face indeed is the index of the mind. Eyes are capable of revealing a person's soul. Nature constantly attempts to express a man's nature by some means or another.

Bharati's friends have uniformly noticed the flaming splendour of his eyes. Not only people who had known him when he was alive but even those who see him in portraits and photographs have noticed the courage and glory reflected in his eyes. Even for a casual observer it seems as if the wisdom of his mind and the light of his genius were reflected in his flaming eyes. In an essay entitled *The Eyes (Kangal)* Bharati speaks of the revealing quality of the eyes :

Nammazhwar speaks of 'the eyes that are red and large', when he describes the eyes of Lord Krishna. The eyes of the sages too resemble those of the Lord. The eyes must be like lotus flowers.

Looking at Va. Ra.'s description of Bharati's eyes as 'the red lined eyes like lotuses,' we may infer that Bharati's eyes revealed a sage whose soul had attained true freedom. His eyes revealed his genius; they fascinated a casual observer at the very first meeting, they revealed the purity and bounty of his heart; their purity was born out of the purity of heart. In the case of a harmoniously blended personality like Bharati, the inner workings of his heart could be perceived in his eyes.

When there is no falsehood, the eyes look straight. Behold ! When falsehood dies it is possible to look straight ahead. When fear dies it is easy to look straight. Behold ! When there is no falsehood, there is no fear. Fear dies and so does falsehood, so writes Bharati. Purity of the eyes is dependent upon a heart, free from falsehood and fear. When the heart is false there is the fear of discovery. Since the eyes must reveal the heart, they dare not look straight. The light of truth sparkles in a person's eyes when he is without falsehood and fear. The eyes then carry the flame of truth. Bharati's eyes reflected such fearlessness and truth.

Bharati's forehead revealed the nature of his intelligence, wisdom and poetic genius. Though Bharati was lean, he was majestic. He was fascinating, and inspired awe and respect in anyone who came into contact with him.

Bharati was always surrounded by a crowd. When he came out, one or two always followed him. When Bharati walked along Pondicherry roads people who sat on their *pyols* would stand up in respect and with folded hands salute him.

Bharati's walk too reflected the majesty of his appearance. His walk also revealed fearlessness, by being rhythmical. As a born-artist, Bharati expressed the harmony and rhythm of his being even in his walk. Va. Ra. describes the uprightness and rhythm of Bharati's walk :

Bharati never walked with a stoop. He used to tell young men never to stoop. His chest completely dry and without flesh, would come out, his head will go up high as he walked on like a

soldier. Bharati was very fond of marching to the tunes of "*La Marseilles*" and "*La Sombre De Muse*," the French marching songs hummed with a rhythm.

In consonance with Bharati's rhythmical appearance devoid of hunches, his inner personality was also harmonious. The aspects of his physical personality must be studied as they reveal his inner personality to a great extent. Yet, the body has its laws and limits, while the heart is limitless in its vastness.

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During the ten years of his life in Pondicherry, Bharati was exposed to a great variety of experiences. Some of these experiences were extraordinary in character. As a poet, as a patriot, as a journalist, as a person and as a humanitarian he had experiences in this ten-year period of self-imposed exile that enabled him to evolve into a saint.

Life in Pondicherry began innocuously enough with the first day of his exiled life spent in Chitti Kuppusami Iyengar's home, for whom the poet had carried a letter of introduction from Srinivasachariar of Madras. He could not stay there long, however, as the British police was constantly persecuting people who helped Bharati, at the same time warning potential patrons against him. Within the month of Bharati's arrival in Pondicherry "*India*" magazine resumed publication. To continue their nationalistic work both Srinivasachariar and Thirumalachariar joined the poet, coming to live in Pondicherry from Madras. "*India*" magazine had last appeared in Madras, British India, in the last week of September, and resumed publication in the French territory of Pondicherry on the 20th day of October.

"*India*" magazine carried the motto "*liberte, egalite, fratenite*," and appeared every Saturday from Etranger Street in Pondicherry. The 15' x 10' size, sixteen pages of the weekly, revolved completely round its editor's personality. Bharati was in contact with a wide cross-section of the people, and was recognised as a great patriot and political propagandist. His editing was very imaginatively

done, and the magazine took an almost entirely political appearance. Its circulation in the Madras Presidency became quite wide, in spite of the British Government's displeasure with the newspaper and its editor.

"*India*" magazine became successful enough to claim a circulation of over 4,000 copies weekly, literally a feat for a vernacular newspaper in those days. As a journalist, besides writing talent, Bharati had a good deal of experience in the art of printing and techniques of publishing. The editorial, cartoons, pictures, presentation of matter, quality of writing as well as the magazine's layout and type-setting contributed to its success. Bharati published a political picture in the first page and wrote the commentary of the picture and editorial on the next page. Bharati found that 'truth' presented imaginatively made a heavier impact.

The picture which "*India*" carried every week on its first page described metaphorically some important political event of the week. This was a very effective political weapon as it created the effect of a thousand words. It attracted the people as well as the Government, leading to the Government's prohibition against the publication.

Bharati strongly believed that propaganda was the best method to fight the British. He insisted on propaganda as a successful political method later in 1921, when one crore of rupees were collected for the freedom movement by Gandhi throughout the country. He asked the leaders to spend more money on propagating the ideals of nationalism and the evils of the British rule in India.

"*India*" magazine thus became a powerful instrument of propaganda in Bharati's hands. He concentrated on two elements, namely, the importance of political freedom, and the injustice done to the Indian people by the British rulers. A simple truth in Bharati's powerful imagination assumed the force of its new appearance, and appealed even to the most pedestrian mind.

An example is Bharati's inclusion of the news item about "National Circus Company" in Pondicherry. Bharati rendered the ordinary occurrence so imaginatively as to convey, besides the plain information, a subtle message about the British Government. Bharati explained an accompanying cartoon in the following manner:

A big stone is being carried by Venkatasamy of the National Circus Company with many people on it. He is called the Indian champion.

Wilson Circus.

Wilson, the finance minister of the British India Government, the proprietor of that circus is levying a burden of taxes with machine guns on them, on the weak people of India.

Besides being the editor of "*India*", Bharati also published a daily called "*Vijaya*" from Pondicherry. "*Vijaya*" was first published from Madras and later on, when the poet moved to Pondicherry, the newspaper also moved with him. "*India*" announced the arrival of the new daily "*Vijaya*" from September 7, 1909. There came also the Tamil monthly "*Karmayogi*" on the pattern of Aurobindo's English counterpart "*Karmayogin*". There followed an announcement in "*India*" of December 4, 1909, that another monthly "*Chitravali*", a periodical devoted chiefly to pictures, would be published and the pictures would be interpreted both in English and Tamil. Whether this magazine ever saw the light of day is yet to be determined by historical research. In addition to these, an English magazine "*Bala Bharata*" was published from Pondicherry which had the distinction of being edited by Bharati.

Bharati's journalistic activity extended to articles, poems and stories to other journals such as "*Swadesamitran*", "*Gnana-Bhanu*", "*Arya*", "*New India*", and "*Common Weal*". In its second year "*India*" magazine was published in a larger size and it was made clear to the public that its objective was to propagate the three vital principles of democracy: liberty, equality and brotherhood and that it would never draw back from its ideal or stop the holy

war against the British rulers. “*India*” magazine never let go of an opportunity to focus attention on freedom and democracy. For example, the magazine felicitated France on her republic day and offered its blessings, “*Vive la Republique!*”.

The format of the “*India*” magazine was divided quite clearly to hold different subjects such as literary matters, handicrafts and miscellanea. In it was published Bharati’s *Gnana Ratham*, that marvel of Tamil prose, every week. The magazine frequently published special numbers, and was always resorting to new methods to hold the public’s attention. Bharati published a series of little comments entitled “Contradictions”, things that the British Government said at different points of time, e.g.:

Lord Morley said some time ago that the British were ruling India only for the benefit of the Indians; recently he said that India was the life-spirit of their British properties. Which one of the statements is true ?

“*India*” magazine ceased publication because of direct and indirect attempts of the British Government to prevent its appearance. In one of his essays, Bharati discusses various problems of running a magazine in Tamil area. Difficulties encountered by Tamil journals and newspapers at that time were the lack of money and lack of support from the Government. Bharati was convinced that Tamil proprietors were occupied in a profitless venture in running Tamil magazines, because they were careless, idle, and had no knowledge of politics, or love of their language, and because they were crazy about everything that was British. In Bharati’s case, however, he had a tremendous knowledge of politics and dexterity in handling a magazine. He had many disadvantages as well in running his magazines. One of the problems with “*India*” magazine was that it was not allowed to circulate outside Pondicherry. Money from British India would not reach “*India*” office. In March 1910, the British Government imposed a law on journals which at last put an end to “*India*” and one after the other all other journals also ceased publication.

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Bharati's efforts at running magazines stopped before the year 1910. The next five years were difficult years for the poet. He tried to publish his poems in book-form. He had published two volumes of his national songs earlier, one in 1908 (*Swadesa Gitangal*) and the other in 1909 (*Janma Boomi*). Another collection of philosophical poems appeared in the year 1914 (*Mada Mani Vachagam*). Most of Bharati's great works were written in 1912. The Tamil translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Kannan-Pattu*, *Kuyil-Pattu* and *Panchali Sabatham* were among his other works in this period. The first part of *Panchali Sabatham* was published that year.

During these years poverty played a major role in Bharati's life. Bharati describes the torments of poverty in an ode to Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth :

We shall surrender unto the feet of Mother Lakshmi,
as this poverty is unbearable.
The heart is clouded by the smoke of insinuation,
The mind that takes a dislike even to the Vedas
I am unable to bear this torment
Poverty in this world is a great torment as
it brings forth insult from the unworthy,
the comraderie of the lazy,
As a light that is drowned into the well,
All our efforts become fruitless.

Poverty distracted him from poetry and the other blessings of life:

How many days has this Chetty been lying for the sake of money ? False postponement... Every day this torture persists.

It is detestable. *O Parashakti!* If you go on subjecting me to such trivia, I will certainly become an atheist. *O Mahashakti!* who has seen your Presence ? Who knows that you have Knowledge ? This world ... all right, all right, I am not going to abuse you now. Protect me, I praise you....

The disturbance due to the creditor has also come into the picture. There is no money to pay the doctor. Confusion, confusion,

utter confusion. How many days, months, years ? *Parashakti*, won't you bless me with the habit of writing poetry ?...

O Mother ? if the creditor continuously makes me miserable and if I go on worrying about buying rice and salt, how can I sing of you ?

Nevertheless he had sufficient strength to face such poverty in life. He was not afraid of poverty. Both my grandmother (the poet's wife) and mother (the poet's daughter) have told me that Bharati boldly faced all the misery of poverty, and remained at peace even at times when he was penniless. R. Kanakalingam has the following to say on his preceptor's defiance of poverty:

There is a lot of difference between Bharati's mental state and that of other poor scholars of his time. Bharati's *bhakti* towards *Parashakti* was deep. Because of this, he was always happy. His wife Smt. Chellammal also never felt disgusted with life on account of their poverty. I have never seen my guru or his wife despairing.

But the poet's life is truly the life of the inner spirit which is invincible. Each person dwells in a world of his own, in which all his joys and sorrows are experienced through his heart. The importance given to a life-internal or external depends on the individual according to his values of life. He is compelled to follow the customs and regulations of society, and has to live in accord with them. When he faces something which is contrary to his own ideals and feelings, emotional conflicts appear. Since the common man sets greater store by the needs and activities of the external world, he does not usually bother to listen to the inner voice of his consciousness. He suppresses the conflicts, and adjusts to society and its values.

On the contrary, the genius considers his inner life the more essential and therefore, seems to come into conflict with the external activities of life. Bharati however did not avoid the external world. While he emphasised the importance of inner life, he did not shun the external world altogether. Like the sages of the

Vedic period, he found the external world an expression of his own inner harmony. He tried to bridge the gulf between the inner and the external worlds, and to establish an ideal life in an actual world. As may be surmised, he faced many difficulties and encountered much unfavourable criticism from the society around him.

Bharati yearned for *Krutha Yuga* to become established at once in this world. *Krutha Yuga* was to him the conception of his ideals as expressed in the external world. He conceived *Krutha Yuga* in which the universe would be perfect and without evil. He pictured a joyous world free from sufferings, a world of enlightenment unmarred by ignorance, a world which rejected superstitions, a world of progress that had done away with corruption. Justice and wisdom lived together in this paradise of his conception ; here unity and goodwill prevailed among men. Bharati tried to establish this *Krutha Yuga* in the actual world and to link both the inner and the external worlds; but his attempt was interpreted as insanity by the society around him. But Bharati's personality was strong enough to endure such criticism and continue to be firm in establishing his ideals in the outer world. He had enough strength and tenacity of purpose to endure the sufferings that came in the wake of his efforts.

Love was the basic emotion of *Krutha Yuga*, preached as a religion and a complete way of life :

I am fearless of anything, O men,
 You embrace my religion.....
 Your duty is merely to love, learn this.

Bharati's inner world was an abode of unbounded love. It was the basic emotion in his personality, which dissolved all the ugly passions of the mind and bound them into a wondrous design of unity; he was able to unify all the forces of his mind in a single harmony, with the melody of love to produce a music of unity in his heart.

The human mind is a large enough faculty to constantly produce heterogeneous emotions. Thinkers have always striven to

subjugate these emotions by intellect. They employ intellect as an instrument to restrain the struggling forces, which pull the mind in different directions. Bharati recorded all the workings of his mind in his *Chittakkadal*. His trials in attaining perfection began during these years, and he described all the movements of his mind so that he might conquer them, finally controlling the mind itself completely:

We fell shy of writing about our weakness lest others should see them.....am going to describe the movements of Bharati's mind.

I and he are different persons. I am pure knowledge and he is a small speck conditioned by his ego. I am going to control him and mend him.

Elsewhere in *Gnana Ratham* the chariot goes around 'Gandharva Loka' and visits every world on the way. In this attempt to conquer his mind, Bharati adopts different techniques to satisfy it. He writes of his extreme love for his mind:

I have great love for this beautiful maiden, the mind. How I began to love her cannot be illustrated here. That is a secret. But in course of time, my love towards this beautiful girl has so increased that I have long since forgotten that I and my mind are separate entities. Unable to bear the sufferings of the mind, I desired to visualise the *Shanti Loka*.

Out of pity for the mind Bharati tries to take it to the world of peace, but feels despair. Soon he concludes that the mind should be killed in order that peace might be obtained.

There is yet another experiment to conquer the mind :

My opinion is that the mind which is a monkey, can be conquered in course of time, by just going on writing whatever it does. Before controlling an object we should know all of its properties. The one which is not completely known cannot be completely conquered. We should understand the mind before conquering it. My conclusion is that if we continuously watch its motions and write of them, its qualities can be completely

understood. O *Parashakti*, every moment, bless me with the necessary strength to express the vibrations of my mind.

In his attempt to conquer his mind, Bharati tried self-analysis. His self-analysis was not the result of self-love or self-pity, for it was a sincere attempt to become free from ego in order to conquer the mind. Self-control and perception of truth (in objects) were the ideals of *Veda-rishis*. Bharati too, in the way of the *Veda-rishis*, tried to free himself from ego and reach for eternal peace. Bharati's was the method of selecting one of the emotions as the controlling and guiding factor of all the emotions of the mind, and utilising it for their unification. Bharati chose love, a powerful emotion, to master all the heterogeneous mass of feelings. The principle of love does not analyse the multiplicity of creation as does the intellect, but with its magical power, is capable of destroying all evil and of establishing the good in a simultaneous effort. Though love was the essential quality in Bharati's personality, there existed his 'ego' which was an impediment in the development of his personality. It was a sort of encrustation, covering the spark of love. In an ordinary man the core of love would perhaps be covered by a thick layer of ego and his personality would be self-centred with an extremely small radius of love. In the case of a poet like Bharati, the layer of ego was extremely thin and, with considerably less effort, he could shed it altogether from his personality.

Bharati was well aware of his egotistic impulses, and realised that unless this negative element was removed, he could not reach the state of perfection which he called 'the state of the *Devas*'. He pleaded to *Shakti* to remove his ego from his personality, and liberate his soul from its bondage :

Will the heart get drenched ?
 Will it not be purged of its falsehoods,
 pride and other infirmities ?
 Will not the lie melt away?
 Will the tears of devotion not flow ?
 In the flood of kindliness

will this despicable dog not quench its desires?
 Stay my furious passion ...
 Make my mind clear or make this body dead,
 Lead me to *yoga* or slay this flesh.

This was the mind that existed in the loftiest state possible but sometimes became frustrated and angry at the imperfections of the outside world. It was Bharati's desire to reach a state of perfection in life, overcoming the faults of his personality. It was his love towards humanity that angered him as well. He could not bear the sight of an insincere action, or a false superstition.

Alas ! what a world is this ! Constant cheating, constant cunning, constant worry. There is no substance in it, it is a hollow life

Too bad, hopeless—is this earth a fit place to live ? Can a man live in this world ? Tortoises and wolves can live. This is the hell of misery. This is the origin of meanness. One should not look even at the faces of those people who do not hate this despicable world.

But Bharati firmly believed in the principle of love, and thought that all memories of sorrow, weariness and fear would be destroyed by love which itself never perishes. He had this realisation in life and so loved all beings of the world. He perceived God in all beings and loved them accordingly. Bharati's love for the universe expressed itself in curious ways. His feeding the crows and the sparrows is an expression of his love for creation. Chellammal, Bharati's wife, has narrated a particular incident. One day, Bharati kissed a small beautiful ass which was playing in the street and the people of his village, who observed it, thought he was insane. She comments

Bharati was an *Atma-gnani*. He acted in the actual world according to his principle that all created beings should be equally loved. His actions may seem insane to us. Once he took a small ass over his shoulders and kissed it... People who looked on this treated this *yogi*, the great *gnani*, as insane...

Poor little peasants used to pick up small margosa fruits and collect tamarind leaves for making fire. One day Bharati asked them why they were picking them up. They replied, 'Sir, we have nothing to eat except these margosa fruits.' Bharati joined them in collecting the unripe margosa and tamarind fruits, and ate them too.

From that day onwards he gave up his taste for food, saying that all objects created by God were filled with nectar, the divine drink. That margosa tastes bitter because we think it is bitter, and that if it was considered nectar, it would accordingly taste sweet.

How to account for these incidents except by saying that he perceived God Himself in the beauty of the ass, in the appearance of the crows and sparrows, in the sourness of the unripe fruit, in the sweetness of ripe fruit, the coolness of the breeze and in the heat of the blaze, and that he lived up to his ideal of perceiving unity in diversity ?

These incidents date back to Bharati's life in Kadayam, his wife's native village, after he returned to British India from Pondicherry. The seed of this great realisation had already been sown while he was still in Pondicherry. Poverty and the need to live in accord with society brought untold sufferings and misery to Bharati and his family. His experiences during this period were unique and typical, for Bharati not only responded as a poet but as an ordinary human being as well. As a patriot opposing the exploiting government, and as a reformer keen on abolishing the caste system and superstitions that prevailed in society at this time, he came across strange experiences of life. This uncommon incident is reported from his Pondicherry days

It was eight o'clock in the morning. By chance, I came to Bharati's house from the Aurobindo Ashram. There was a small gathering in the verandah of the house. From the centre of the verandah smoke was coming out. It looked as though somebody was lighting a fire. Some people were uttering *Veda-mantras*. Bharati was seated beside the fire. An untouchable boy, Kanakalingam was sitting next to him. There were also present

some scholars like, Professor Subramania Iyer. I asked the professor what was going on. He said, 'Kanakalingam's holy thread ceremony is just over and he is learning the *Gayatri- mantra* now.' I again, asked him, 'Is it the untouchable Kanakalingam who is seated there ?' 'Don't you doubt it,' the professor replied, 'he is the same person. Bharati is teaching him *Gayatri-mantra*.'

Bharati believed in abolishing the caste system to the extent of selecting a non-Brahmin from the then considered most backward community, and making him wear the holy-thread, thus emphasising the importance of equality of all castes. Bharati who felt God's presence in all beings, treated untouchables as his own brothers and ate with them in the same row. Kanakalingam who wore the holy thread under Bharati's compulsion writes :

In the olden days when caste system and untouchability prevailed in the country, Bharati not only invited the untouchables to his house but gave them a permanent place in his heart... My guru Bharati shared the joys and sorrows of the untouchables as Mahatma Gandhi does today.

In spite of these varied experiences Bharati led a happy life as life was poetry to him. He considered all the aspects of life—positive as well as negative—as the expressions of life—poetry. He patterned his own life fully suggesting the power of the soul which is infinite, and beyond the ken of ordinary minds.

A CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Pondicherry was a place of inspiration for the poet Bharati. There were many solitary haunts that created an atmosphere of close communion with Nature. There was a beautiful mango grove to the west of the lovely city of Pondicherry where Bharati's *Kuyil Pattu* was conceived and written. The mango grove was the property of Vellachu Krishnasamy Chettiar. There Bharati used to go and spend hours at a time, oblivious to the world in his poetic frenzy. The song of the *koel* and the atmosphere of beauty and joy inspired him to express an experience of absolute beauty in poetry. Va. Ra. speaks of Bharati's effort in bringing out his experience in words and through rhythm:

Sariga-ga-gama—it should be known to the people around him that he is thinking of a new poem. He would shout in a high pitch of voice *sa sa sa.. sa sa sa.* without a break in breathing. He would beat time with his right foot; if the time slipped he would kick the earth with his left foot. Silence for a moment... He would shout praying for the gift of words, would sing one of the musical stanzas of Thayumanavar again, for the second time, *sariga-ga-gama*.

This can only be compared to the labour pains of delivering a baby. It is a sight of privilege to see enthusiasm and weariness come out together. It could be seen that Bharati at that time ceased to relate to the ordinary human world. The force with which the new song appears seems almost to break his body.

It is no exaggeration to say that Bharati's poems are full of the element of blood and life-giving spirit. Elsewhere Bharati has described the noises of a 10 o'clock in the morning as heard from his corner :

On all the four sides the voices of crows, interrupting are the noises of parrots and doves, in the street the noise of a *Kavadi* carrier, the sound of the temple-conch at a distance, the proud crowing of a cock in the street, infrequently the chatter of women walking down the road, the cries of children in neighbouring houses, a beggar's voice calling out 'Narayana, Gopala...' the sounds of dogs barking, noises of doors being shut and opened, some figure on the street clearing the throat lightly... the noise of a vegetable vendor at a distance, the noise of a rice vendor—all these kinds of noises seep into my ears gradually.

Bharati transformed all these noises into varied forms, in making his poetry, and was capable of preserving his inner harmony so that all these noises turned to become poetic elements, ceasing to be mere disturbances.

Though the poet perceives harmony in all noises of the world, nevertheless, he too is subject to inner conflict. He seeks the grand silence of nature in order to harmonise his inner faculties. The silence of nature draws both the inner and outer faculties of the poet to itself producing in the poet a state of harmony which may be roughly termed as a state of poetic frenzy.

Nature in all her manifestations was a source of inspiration to Bharati and he loved to be in an environment of natural beauty. There was a grove of coconut trees also, the property of Krishnasamy Chettiar on which Bharati composed a poem. The solitude in these resorts offered solace to the poet.

On November 22, 1916, Pondicherry was hit by a violent storm; there was a great loss of life and property throughout the city. In Muthialpet, the coconut grove of Krishnasamy Chettiar alone stood undistorted by the violent winds. Bharati found in this an act of compassion on the part of God *Vayu*, as indeed it was a poet's abode and the property of a poor but *good* man. Bharati had moved to a bigger house just a day before the storm shook Pondicherry. The house which he had occupied previously was totally destroyed in the storm. This again was an act of grace and God's mercy benevolently shown to the poet's humanity.

Bharati saw the tempest as the expression of Nature's wrath. In the tradition of the Vedic sages, Bharati regarded the tempest, rain, lightning and thunder as the physical manifestation of Lord *Rudra*, and so concluded that Nature was expressing *roudra rasa*.¹ He recognised that rain and wind were but deeds of *Shakti*, and perceived the tempest as a force which destroyed the old and evil things inside man in order to create joy and liberty in his mind, rendering him a *Deva*, an immortal. The tradition of the *Veda-rishis* regarded the tempest as a force which came to destroy falsehood, fear, worry, sorrow, desire and such other impurities of the mind. So too did Bharati, and in his joy of witnessing a great and divine sight, he composed the poem "Rain" which adequately represents the *roudra* (anger) *rasa* of Nature and the poet's sense of wonder at witnessing this great sight.

Bharati, by nature, was too impatient to wait for good things to happen or evil things to be destroyed in their own time. He was in complete sympathy with Nature's total devastation, by causing the storm, of the impurities of mind and the evil of the world. The "Rain" expresses, even through its rhythm, the violence of *roudra rasa*, and the wonder and joy of the poet's perception of it.

The beach in Pondicherry was yet another source of inspiration to Bharati. He describes in *Kuyil Pattu*, the sight of the beautiful morning sun coming into contact with the blue sea, creating an atmosphere of beauty, harmony and union. Bharati used to walk on the sands, and on the iron bridge, enjoying the beauty of the dawn or the twilight, and listening to the chant of the sea, for ever praising *Shakti* with the *mantra* 'Om'. The sea sings with a blissful rhythm the theme of the Vedas, asserting the existence of Ultimate Reality.

Pondicherry's many temples, especially, the Manakkula Vinayagar temple stimulated Bharati's religious emotions and *Vinayagar Nanmanimalai* is the outcome of this experience of the 'self and his abiding faith in God'. Equally great was the inspiration of Muthumari and Chittantasami temples at Pondicherry, the subjects of many of Bharati's poems.

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A poet's inspiration comes out of many unknown sources. As many tiny streams unidentifiably merge into a river, so too the many experiences of life coverage in a poet's consciousness to produce poetry. Besides these places which inspired Bharati, there were other things which had an influence on the poet. Time and surroundings, people around him, books he read, the Tamil literary tradition to which he belonged, contemporary writers and their works are a few of such influences.

Bharati had a large number of friends whose influence is marked enough to be noticeable. There were others who helped him, admired him, and some whose mere company delighted the poet. Bharati was fortunate to have Aurobindo's friendship and company at this time. As it turned out, Aurobindo proved the greatest influence on his spiritual growth. Aurobindo too was involved in the freedom struggle, and came to Pondicherry in April 1910, seeking political asylum. Both Bharati and Srinivasachariar helped him to escape from Bengal, and, initially, Aurobindo stayed with Kalavai Sankara Chettiar at Pondicherry. Soon afterwards, V.V.S. Iyer arrived in Pondicherry. He had been to London to study for a degree in Law and became involved in the Freedom Movement with Savarkar and other patriots. When Madanlal Dhingra, a young Indian shot Curzon Wylie, a British officer, Savarkar was arrested in connection with the case, and V.V.S. Iyer escaped to Pondicherry with a great deal of difficulty. V.V.S. Iyer, Aurobindo, Bharati and Srinivasachariar—all the four friends lived in Eswaran Darmaraja Koil Street.

These friends spent most of their time in discussing literary and spiritual matters. V.V.S. Iyer wrote short stories, and was a fine and sensitive literary critic. Aurobindo was inclined towards spiritual matters. Bharati was a poet first of all, a great lover of music and a singer himself, and expressed aspirations towards human perfection and spiritual freedom. Particularly, Bharati and Aurobindo joined together in reading and doing extensive research on the Vedas. Bharati translated in Tamil some of the *Veda-mantras*, and *Patanjali Yoga-sutra*, with interpretation in Tamil. Both Aurobindo and Bharati read almost all the originals as well as

all the available interpretations of the scriptures resulting in an extraordinary piece of work.

The experiences of the Vedic sages were born in the depth of the heart, in a state of awareness. The words of the *Veda-mantras* drawn from the depth of such awareness have a magical quality. To get behind the magical words, and perceive their experience, one requires skill in language, philosophical knowledge and the gift of experience. Bharati was equally proficient in Sanskrit and Tamil; he was conversant with the nuances of the Sanskrit language. His commentaries on *Patanjali Yoga Sutra* and some of the *Veda-mantras* are highly original and they are quite distinctly brilliant and different from the previous interpretations of many commentators of the old school.

Bharati also translated the *Bhagavad Gita* and wrote a very long introduction which remains a good example of his lucid prose style. It is said to have won the acclaim of the great Aurobindo. Aurobindo himself wrote later a commentary in great detail, on each of the chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Though Bharati has not written a chapter by chapter analysis, in his introduction he examines in detail the more important ideas of the *Gita*. Bharati's philosophical poems were inspired by his study of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and Buddha as also his knowledge of the *Bible* and the *Koran*.

Bharati happened to earn the friendship of many *sanyasis* in Pondicherry. There were Kullachami, Govindasamy, and the Swami from Jaffna of whom Bharati sings in his *Bharati Arubattaru*. The most influential among them was Kullachami, and Bharati nearly considered him his guru. Kullachami gave him knowledge of the self, and led him in the path to salvation. Bharati praised him as a mature philosopher, as one who had conquered death, as one who had cast off attachment, desires and fear, as a *Deva*, and as one who had performed the rites of *kayakalpam*:

He is the Jatabharata of *Kali Yuga* ... Great sage ... One who has compassion for all living things. With the power of *yoga* is capable of absolute control over breath.

Some call you a sage and some others regard you a lunatic. Some praise you as one who has attained the eight ways of worshipping and attaining yogic powers

Who are you ? and what is your power ?

What do you know ? Why do you go about clad in rags ?

Why do you look like *a Deva* ?

How do you play with children and stray dogs ?

How do you go about as a lunatic in appearance?

How do you appear like Lord Siva ?

How do you stand out without desires ?

In an essay of two parts entitled "*Summa*" Bharati dwells on the powers of Kullachami. He describes how the $4\frac{3}{4}$ feet Kullachami looked $73\frac{3}{4}$ feet, and became gigantic; how he then looked like Siva, Ganapati as he bent down and Vishnu when he raised his face. Bharati had his experiences of the 'self' with Kullachami's help and was led by him in the path of wisdom. Bharati sings how Kullachami taught him the rare and wondrous feat of attaining to Heaven from earth itself :

By the the grace of the silent preceptor we have attained to the level of Immortals ... May the feet of the Guru be blessed who led way to reach out to the Heavens from this base earth.

Once Govindasamy showed Bharati his father's image, and Bharati was greatly impressed by the extraordinary powers of the *sanyasis*. There is reason to believe that association with the *sanyasis* led Bharati to drug-addiction, and experiments with mind expanding drugs during this period.

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The realisation of the self came to Bharati through his many relationships with friends and relatives. *Kannan Songs*, the most mature of Bharati's philosophical poems resulted from his experiences with his many relatives. He considered them as different forms of Lord Krishna through whom, he preaches

realisation. To *regard* God in terms of the relationships is different from *beholding* God in all the relationships around a person. Bharati experienced Lord Krishna's presence as the inner truth in every relationship. On that basis, the *Kannan Songs* describe the varied experiences of the poet. Bharati believed that through these experiences, God leads man gradually and by degrees to maturity of mind; He lives with man in various relationships in order to purify him and to lead him to wisdom.

Kuvalai Krishnamachariar was one such relationship. Bharati visualises the Lord in him, manifested as the master and the disciple, as patron as well as the servant, as friend, philosopher, and guide, and sings of the experience. Kuvalai himself memorised Bharati's songs early in the mornings, singing in his hoarse voice and causing much disharmony. He used to irritate Bharati most of the time with his inquisitive nature and seemingly witless but very wise questions. Such was Bharati's generosity that he sings of Kuvalai as the Master who came to enlighten him in the guise of a disciple. The disciple, Bharati's Kannan, pretended to be less wise, to be desirous of progressing on listening to Bharati's language and teaching, and appeared to think his poems were glorious —only to augment the pride of his heart. It was with a view to final destruction of pride that the disciple praised Bharati and his learning and swelled his ego beyond limits. He praised Bharati on the one hand, and disobeyed his commands on the other, and did exactly the opposite of whatever Bharati ordered. Finally, Bharati realised that it is not his business to make or change or destroy other's qualities, when he accepted his defeat in trying to change his disciple's qualities, he perceived the ultimate truth of *Karma yoga*, that he should perform all tasks without passion and desire, and this would be possible only when ego is destroyed. Paradoxically, the disciple preaches *karma yoga* to his guru. In conclusion about Bharati-Kuvalai relationship, it may be noted that Kuvalai Kannan saved Bharati's life when the poet was caught under the feet of an angry elephant in Parthasarathy Temple, Madras.

The poem entitled “*Kannammavin Ninaippu*”, and beginning ‘I consider you alone as Rati’ had in its original from Bharati’s wife’s name Chellamma. The four poems entitled “*Kannammavin Kadal*”, “*Kannammavin Ninaippu*”, “*Manappidam*”, “*Kannammavin Ezhil*” are included in editions under the title “Devotional Songs”. But all the four songs are love poems addressed to his wife by the poet.

Bharati considered that all relationships and all experiences with them led him to the ultimate realisation of the ‘self’. His wife was no exception as an instrument through whom the poet could reach the heights of awareness gradually and by degrees. He regarded his wife as the form of *Shakti*, and treated her as his equal—in fact a little higher than himself :

Shakti is the beloved wife and
the state of divinity must be
attained through her.
On the earth when *all* life is divine
Is not the wife a Goddess, too ?

Bharati sang of the love of his wife as a powerful means by which his senses, mind and the spirit were drawn into unity. The love expressed through the senses is capable of releasing one from the sorrows of life, making him forget everything else, and thus becoming one with itself. To Bharati, the experience of the senses was the first stage in the great experience of love :

A body like that of gold
A manner like lightning.
The nectar of her body is sweet
even to thought
Her words are sweeter than the song,
Kannamma pours the nectar of her lips,

writes Bharati of his beloved wife who drew his senses into unity by the power of her love which expressed through the beauty of her body; it was capable of unifying his wayward emotions, the medley of thoughts, and making him forget the worldly sorrows of poverty

and distress. Bharati places, in his experience of love, sensuous enjoyment as a preliminary step to the union of the spirits and the joy that follows. The beauty of the beloved is capable of leading one to the depth of joy, releasing one from the worries of the world. No other thought except that of the beloved absorbs him, she alone occupies his mind. As it is touched with the divine want of love, the beloved's body is like gold, she is nectar, and she is sweet in thought. The love that is expressed through the beautiful form of the beloved is capable of leading man to immortality :

Your lips are nectarine streams,
 Your eyes are full of radiance,
 Your body is like beaten gold,
 As long as I live
 You render it impossible for me
 to think of anything else,
 and lead me to immortality
 As, to sage Suka all things appeared to be God,
 So to me all things appear to be you.

Bharati has expressed a deep experience of love in his *Kannan Songs—The Lover and the Beloved*. Chellamma was a source of inspiration to him all his life. She married him at the age of seven and lived with him for about twenty-four years. In all these years she had accompanied him in his unusual experiences. Like Kasturba, in the context of Gandhi, she was subjected to various experiments by Bharati, and she had come through all of them. Not that she was very intelligent at that young age, but as she was brought up in a village, in the atmosphere of a happy, married household, where the wife obeyed her husband and the age-long tradition of an Indian woman who believed in living in harmony with a husband, she was willing to do as the husband told her. Later on in her life with Bharati, she learnt many things, including reading and enjoyment of poetry.

Bharati believed strongly in the equality of the sexes. He regarded the inferior place which women were given in the social structure as barbaric, that came in the interim period of British rule.

Bharati used to walk with his wife holding her hands in the Ettayapuram streets, to go to the Raja gardens. In those times, this was considered a very unusual behaviour indeed. Bharati always acted according to what he thought and said was right.

Bharati used to sing or read his poems to his wife and daughters as soon as he finished composing them. Chellamma and the daughters used to sing his poems as the poet himself taught them. Bharati was an excellent musician; he was well-versed in Carnatic and Hindustani styles of music. He enjoyed the music of Thyagaraja, and other composers as he knew very well the language of composition, Telugu. Sometimes he would sing Hindi bhajans, the ragas of which he loved greatly. Those who have listened to Bharati's songs as they were sung and set to music by the poet himself would well realise the distinct flavour of the poet's musical talent. Bharati was very fond of experimenting with different musical notes, and the combinations were often so novel that the song took an altogether new form in the manner in which the poet set the piece to music. Chellamma too was talented in music as she was brought up in an atmosphere of music, and used to sing Bharati's songs till the day of her death, at the age of sixty-three.

She had a surprising gift of memory for Bharati's poetry, and was able to identify many of Bharati's original compositions.

It may be surmised that in many ways Chellamma was an extraordinary woman. As she lived with Bharati for more than two decades, she developed many qualities that most women would envy. Her courage is worth mentioning, and, after Bharati, the way she faced the varied problems of life was little short of amazing. The courage, faith in God and essential goodness, and optimistic view of life—qualities which she developed were exactly the same as her husband's. In my seventeen years of life with her, I had never once seen her despairing in any situation. She would recite Bharati's poems quite often, as village women in our country recite old sayings frequently, to find strength and enlightenment, for herself. Just before she died, she spoke of Bharati and sang the following two lines even when she had become partially unconscious:

I came but to wait and serve Him
and He made me the famed minister...

Bharati had deep and enduring love for his family. As a man his love for his wife and parental affection for his daughters were similar to any man's love of his family. But a poet's love runs to extremes. For example, Bharati loved his elder daughter Thangamma so greatly—and she was beautiful and intelligent. He did not listen to the people of the village or other relatives who gossiped in vain about his keeping her unmarried even after she had come of age, thinking that she should marry at the proper age a person whom she wanted to marry. Ironically, it so happened that the daughter was married with the help of Bharati's brother, Viswanatha Iyer. The bridegroom was brought to Bharati for approval and Bharati was happy to see that he was good-looking, healthy and had sharp eyes. Bharati performed all the rites of the marriage of his daughter with a great deal of enthusiasm, chanting the *mantras* from the depth of his heart.

The younger daughter, Sakuntala, was very active, unlike her sister who was by nature very quiet and unassuming. Bharati was very fond of the name Sakuntala, the heroine of Kalidasa's *Sakuntalam*. As Sakuntala was born when Bharati was reading *Sakuntalam*, he named his daughter after the heroine of the play. Bharati would on occasion sit on the first floor of the house, a roofless structure, and, look at the morning sky, the birds and life gathering momentum on the street below. Bharati's poem "Morning" was the outcome of one such occasion in which, as the daughter Sakuntala described what was happening outside, the factual description was rendered into verses by the father.

Bharati has mentioned some of his friends in his essays and stories. He calls them by nick-names, partly humorously as well as with a veiled truthfulness. "Vilakkennai" Chettair (Sabapathi) who owned Bharati's house never asked him for payment of rent. He was so good and compassionate that even if he had to ask Bharati for money he would not be able to do so. Instead he would listen to Bharati's songs and go back without asking anything. Bharati

called him “Vilakkennai” (castor oil) as his nature was so uncertain as to reflect smoothness of his namesake.

There were “Vellachu” (jaggery piece) Krishnasamy Chettiar, “Elikkunju” (mouse) Chettiar (Armugam Chettiar), “Valluru” (kite) Naicker, Brahmaraya Iyer (Professor N. Subramanja Iyer) who became characters in Bharati’s writings. Mandayam Srinivasachariar, Sundaresa Iyer and S. Duraisamy Iyer were among Bharati’s friends who helped him in numerous ways. Though Sundaresa Iyer was very poor himself, he helped Bharati as a true friend in times of necessity. Bharati was so close to him as to compose the poem beginning ‘How have you been gone’ in his absence.

In spite of such an array of loyal friends the Pondicherry police began actively preventing help or money reaching the poet. Two incidents responsible for such tightening of controls were the assassination of sub-collector Ashe and the suicide of the patriot-assassin, Vanchinathan. During such difficult periods, Bharati had the good fortune of some friendships. His friends were courageous enough to help him even at the risk of their own involvement with the police. Such heroic men were Sundaresa Iyer, Kalavai Sanki Chettiar, and Ponnu Murugesam Pillai. The whole family, including his wife and sons of Murugesam Pillai were devoted to Bharati. Bharati was one of them indeed and was free to do as he pleased in their house. Anni Ammal, the wife of Murugesam Pillai, took motherly care of Bharati, giving him food whenever he came. Unfortunately the life of the family ended tragically. Raja Bahadur, the eldest son, was sent to Paris for his studies in engineering. At the time of his return the world war broke out and Murugesam Pillai received a telegram carrying the message that the ship on which his son was travelling was destroyed by the Germans. Murugesam Pillai died soon after, and Raja Bahadur arrived on the twenty-seventh day of his father’s death.

Ammakkannu was a faithful servant in Murugesam Pillai’s house and had a great affection for Bharati. She could be trusted with anything, including taking care of Bharati’s family at the time

when his house and movements were closely watched by the police.

Among Bharati's compatriots, V. O. Chidambaram Pillai was a close and noteworthy friend. Bharati helped him establish Swadesi Shipping Company, which failed later. When V. O. Chidambaram Pillai was arrested on the orders of collector Wynch at Tirunelveli, and sentenced to forty years in prison, Bharati was greatly upset. The poems he composed as the imaginary conversations between V. O. Chidambaram Pillai and the collector are full of patriotic fervour and show Bharati's understanding of cultural history of India and the psychology of British tyranny.

Subramania Siva was another friend of Bharati, who went to jail for ten years for the fault of loving his country, and on his release started a monthly "*Gnana Bhanu*" in the year 1913. Bharati contributed to "*Gnana Bhanu*" regularly ; *Chinna Sankaran Katnai* was published (only six chapters) in "*Gnana Bhanu*" every month. His poems "*Ghana Bhanu*" (*Surya Sthomam*), "*Yoga Siddhi*", "*Oliyum Irulum*", "*Madhu*", "*Kannan-En-Thai*", "*Veinkuzhal*", "*Pappa Pattu*" and "*Iravamai*". appeared in "*Gnana Bhanu*". V. Ramasamy Iyengar and Bharati Dasan (Kanka Subburathinam) were among Bharati's admirers. Bharati Dasan, as a follower of Bharati tradition in the history of Tamil literature, is an important sequence.

Parali S. Nellaiyappar was a publisher and one of Bharati's close friends. He published a collection of Bharati's poems in 1917, under the title *Nattuppattu*, and published a second edition in 1919. Bharati's many letters to Nellaiyappar regarding the publication of his works are available today. Bharati's letters may be regarded as pieces of literature and as revealing his poetic personality. Bharati's letters show him as a great patriot and lover of his language. In a letter to his wife from Varanasi. Bharati advises Chellemma to learn, to read and write well in Tamil. In another letter to his brother Viswanathan he asks him not to write in English, but to write in Tamil or Sanskrit. Bharati disclosed his

ideals as well as his love of the Tamil people and language in one of his letters to Nellaiyappar :

Brother, mind is the world.
Arise, arise, arise,
Away, upwards, and far, far away.
Burst with laughter at the sight of
old superstitions, fools who are trying
to hold their positions by means of ropes
Let there be wings for you ! Fly away !

The letter he wrote to M. Raghava Iyengar (October 18, 1907) is remarkable for its simplicity of expression and patriotic fervour. Bharati called 'patriotism' 'a new flame' as it was capable of dispelling the darkness of slavery. Bharati, saluting this flame in the heart of M. Raghava Iyengar, writes :

I prostrate before the flame of patriotism kindled in the purity of your heart. You say that the wheel of time goes round in the end. Yes, the wheel turns indeed. In that revolving, the time has come when the humiliated India will be replaced by Mahabharatam (the Grand India). The fire in your heart will lead the Indians, now drowned in the darkness of humiliation towards the grand concept of Mother India. I salute this fire. May it prosper.

Bharati's foresight did not fail; as the wheel of time turned, the flame of patriotism kindled in the hearts of many thousands of Indians and brought her freedom. Though Bharati did not live to see his country liberated from foreign rule, a poet's vision has the streaks of immortality which blends the past and the future in the unity of the present.

A POET'S POLITICS

Bharti was a great devotee of *Shakti*. It cannot however be said that he followed the pattern of worship called *saktham*. *Shakti* is a movement that is full of strength and life and speed, attraction and vigour. Bharati's ideal was to possess in his soul and spirit, body and mind, great vigour, and attaining this became for him a way of life, a religion. He describes in his poem "*Shaktikku Atma Samarppanam*" the way to attain *Shakti* in life :

Make your hand mighty.

Let it have the power to break away stones.

Make your vision powerful.

You will have good sight; you will develop truth
and kindliness in your vision.

Make your ear sharp.

Good music will flow into it; let it receive
good messages.

Train your nostrils in such a way that
they are capable of smelling sweet things only.

Make your body strong.

It will help you conquer death and live long.

Make your voice powerful.

Make your shoulders capable of withstanding
any weight.

Embolden your heart; fear will flee from it.

Make your stomach capable of digesting anything.

Make the loins powerful; your offspring will be good.

If your feet become as strong as steel

they will have the strength to go where they wish
to go.

Make your mind powerful.
It will always rejoice, and forget unhappiness.
Good thoughts, order and strength will come to It.
It will be full of *shakti*, spreading *shakti*
everywhere, and it will accomplish all things.
It will be full of force and save you from
evil deeds and evil consequences.
It will grant you your desires.
It will increase beauty and grace.
It will perceive good writings.
The light of Truth will flow into it.

In this endeavour to make his body, mind and spirit powerful, he tried all possible methods of exercising the body, and followed *bhaktiyoga* to strengthen and purify his mind and spirit.

Though Bharati was handsome in appearance, he was not very strong in structure. In fact, he was quite thin, lean and famished. He tried to strengthen his body by getting trained in sword-fighting which eventually he could not continue to do. He used to take long walks on the beach, in the beautiful places close to Pondicherry. He would look at sunlight as he believed that sun light was capable of making his eyes powerful. He was very careful in his dietary habits. He never ate left-overs. Even food freshly cooked in the morning became unacceptable at night if left over, He would fly into a rage if he saw someone not conforming to his own ideas of eating.

He was not very strong in mind either. He could never bear anyone suffer for lack of anything—food, clothing and shelter and on account of disease. He used to give away everything—his coat and every piece of clothing regardless of the person's need. He was as scared about disease as he was about death. Bharati's life abounds in instances in which one or more of these characteristics were expressed clearly.

Once his younger daughter, Sakuntala, fell ill. The child could not open her eyes in high fever, and Bharati became so restless and

sad as to plead to *Shakti* for the recovery of his daughter. He did not have money to pay the doctor, but the doctor was content to hear Bharati sing the “*Bhaktiyinale*” in lieu of his fee. The poem is an example of his unshakable faith in *Shakti*.

By bhakti the mind will be chastened.
Order will be established in all actions.

To Bharati, *bhakti* meant faith. *Bhakti* is the realisation that the contradictions in this world are illusory, and there is a unity pervading all the contradictions, a unity which we will ultimately join. Being one with the harmony of creation and finding the joy of this unity without always being in a nervous hurry is *bhakti*. *Bhakti* brings forth an orderly life, peace and supreme joy. As Bharati lacked in physical and mental strength, he would strive to attain strength again and again with his belief in *Shakti*.

Once a friend of Bharati, who was a victim of leprosy, came to see him, and with great enthusiasm he took Sakuntala in his lap. Bharati would not hurt others’ feelings and so kept calm, exercising great restraint. After the friend left, at once he gave Sakuntala a bath after applying kerosine oil wherever she had been touched by the leprous friend. His fear of disease and death was so strong that he began a search for a way to become immortal in this world. One day, in the early morning, he happened to hear the following song of one of the *siddhas* by a *pandaram* who was trudging along the street:

The breathing that is regulated in sleep
May turn its course, and be gone.

Bharati was shocked to realise the truth of these words, and he wrote his thoughts inspired by this lore in an essay, *In Search of Immortality*

When I listened to this song, I became very thoughtful. What is this ? When the body is so uncertain what can we begin and achieve in this world of uncertainties ?. ...Great is the wisdom needed. There must be great courage of heart. There must be

learning, fame, wealth, and we must render our relatives, friends and people around us happy in their lives. We have great desires. If these goodly desires have to succeed, we must lay a good foundation and must build step by step. It is not possible to create lasting happiness in short span of time... Time is required for attaining knowledge of the self ... When the next moment is uncertain, what to cherish ?

Bharati followed Kullachami who led the way to show men immortality. He introduces himself as a *siddha*, in *Bharati Arubattaru* and considers himself an immortal, who had come to establish *Krutha Yuga* in this world. In a poetic play called *Viduthalai* he portrays that all the powers of Indra, Agni, Vayu, Jyoti, Maruthu and other divine powers contribute to him their strength and bring him out of his stupor; they ask him to bring order into the human face. This is his excuse for wanting to live eternally in this world by controlling his body, mind as well as his spirit.

It is generally believed that *siddhas* had mastery over the art of living long years by strengthening their bodies through *kayakalpa* methods. To send the *Sushumna*, *Swadhisthana*, *Manipura*, *Anahata*, *Visuddha*, *Ajna* and *Sahasrara* through certain ordained paths is part of their way of life and the eight *siddhis* namely *anima*, *laghima*, *prapti*, *prakamyam*, *mahima*, *ishitwa*, *vashitum* and *kamavasayita* are attained through such methods. Bharati has described in his works his meetings with many such *siddhas*, and his understanding of their extraordinary powers. But, nowhere do we find any evidence of his having tried to follow their pattern of life himself by putting the body to hardship or by controlling the breathing-system except that he did some exercises, sporadically. Bharati discovered *bhakti-yoga* as his way of controlling the mind and spirit. He believed that the spirit could be controlled by exercising control over the body and mind.

Control the body;
you may control the life.

But, for several reasons Bharati's health was deteriorating through the years, and he did not live more than thirty-nine years in this world. The hardships he had experienced in his life, the heart of a poet, which was naturally under stress of various emotions, his passion for freedom and not getting it were some of the reasons which frustrated him mentally sometimes and effected decay in his body. He tried again and again till the day of his death to straighten himself in all respects with the power of his will, hope, and finally, faith in God.

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After 1915, Bharati started writing for the "*Swadesamitran*" again at a salary of thirty rupees a month. In the meantime the control of British police indirectly over the political figures in Tamil Nadu became excruciating, and Bharati was not able to get any help either from Pondicherry or outside the French territory. Even if he came by some money, it would not last in his hands for a day. Many attempts had been made by the British police to force Bharati out of the French territory. Once when he came across such an incident of an act of treachery by the British police, Bharati composed the poem "*Pagaivanukku Arulvai*". He never became angry with the traitor but simply forgave, and even loved him following a principle that even the enemy should be loved as a mark of God's presence in all beings.

Bharati found the life in exile intolerable, and decided to leave Pondicherry with his family. After World War I ended, in November 1918, he came out of Pondicherry and courted arrest in Cuddalore. Chellamma and the family went back to Kadayam, Chellamma's native village, and Bharati was released from Cuddalore jail after some time with the help of Rangasamy Iyengar and other friends. Bharati then went to live in Kadayam for about two years, till the end of November 1920.

Kadayam is a beautiful village situated near the east-coast mountains, in Tirunelveli district. Though the village is quite small, it abounds in natural beauty and a spiritual atmosphere pervades the scenery. There are quite a few temples around the village, and

Bharati became accustomed to taking long walks to enjoy the beauty of nature in these resorts. The Nityakalyani temple stands about three or four kilometers away from the village, and Bharati sings of Her in great love. At the foot of the mountain, in a Kali temple, Bharati sat and listened to the music of the birds thrilled to a mood of poetic frenzy. At noon, various birds assembled there—sparrows, parrots, nightingales, crows, the naganavai birds and numerous others. The music of the birds created in Bharati varied imaginings and effected order in his poetical thoughts. His inner ear was capable of keen concentration on the nuances of the complex sounds around him and he attempted to capture the varied noises, and 'to express them in Tamil words. similar in sound structure. 'Ranga', 'Dairya' 'Jiva Jiva', 'Siva Siva' 'Kottada' are some of the words which Bharati assembled from the bird noises. Bharati's *Jagat Chitram* was born out of his experiences in these places where a man could realise the vastness of the universe and his own relatively, insignificant place in it. The blue mountains, the vast skies and the firmament, the light of the sun, the birds—all together produced in him poetic emotions. From the language of the birds, Bharati learnt a new way of life, a life of freedom—total freedom in all respects—and the principle of immortality.

During this period Bharati was living in a house situated at the west end of the street. There was a temple of Rama where many festivals were held, and great musicians were brought to perform at the festivities. Bharati, himself a great lover of music and a musician, enjoyed these festivities greatly. Sometimes he would lead the early morning bhajan groups which went through the streets singing the praise of Lord Rama. On one such occasion he composed the poem "*Nandalala*", a piece which attains to the heights of philosophic experience. Bharati believed, and sang that if he surrendered at Lord Rama's feet, he would never die, and live in this world for ever.

Political and patriotic activity for Bharati continued in visits to nearby villages to Kadayam, and speaking to small audiences. Pottalpudur is a small village near Kadayam where there is a

predominant Muslim population. Bharati once visited this place, and spoke to a Muslim audience on Islam. As Bharati was proficient in matters of other religions as in Hinduism, his talk on Islam and Koran became a memorable experience to the community. It was on this occasion that he composed and sang the poem "*Allah*", a piece unique for its intense religious experience.

A meeting between Bharati and Mahatma Gandhi came about in March 1919, when the latter visited Madras to consult with Congress leaders before launching a movement against the Rowlatt Act. As Va. Ra. describes the incident, Bharati met Gandhiji in C. Rajagopalachari's house where he was staying. There were Gandhiji's secretary Mahadev Desai, Adinarayana Chettiar, A. Rangasamy Iyengar who was the editor of "*Swadesamitran*", S. Satyamurti, Rajaji, Va. Ra., and others surrounding the Mahatma. Bharati entered and sat beside Gandhiji and asked him if he could preside over a meeting in which Bharati was going to be the featured speaker.

Gandhiji enquired Desai as to his engagements for the day, and as he had another engagement, he asked Bharati if he could postpone the meeting for the next day. Bharati said this was not possible, and blessed Gandhiji's movement and quickly took his leave. Gandhiji asked who this visitor was and Rajaji answered that he was a nationalistic poet from Tamil Nadu. On hearing this Gandhiji seems to have remarked that good care must be taken of such poets as Bharati.

Bharati paid a poetical tribute to Gandhiji later. In a poem forecasting the freedom of India by Gandhiji's non-violent methods Bharati speaks of the Mahatma :

You have brought into politics a spiritual
awareness and courage—
Politics that is entwined with war, murders
and chastisement—
To regard all human beings children of God and
perceive in them forms of Godliness,

To regard one's own life on a par with other lives may be full of evil—

...All this you have done.

This poem must be dated later in 1921 because Bharati wrote an article about his own ideas against Gandhiji's non-cooperation methods in "*Swadesamitran*" in November 1920. This essay is in the form of a reply to friends who were asking him in letters and in person, about his ideas of the Mahatma's non-cooperation movement.

In later years of his life, Bharati was evolving into an *Atmagnani* and both inwardly and outwardly he seemed to be flooded with love and *bhakti*. Such an attitude made him very hopeful of attaining freedom by peaceful methods. Though he suggested in the article that people of India might get freedom by immediately following the final stages of non-cooperation methods such as no payment of tax, he was quite certain that refusing parliamentary seats, and attorneyships and students quitting schools—were not the proper means of achieving the required results of independence for India. He was convinced that there were too many chances of losing lives and property by violating some of the laws of the British Government, and thought that this method might lead the country to a state of destruction and confusion.

Bharati suggested alternate methods in this article such as propagating the principles of nationalism among the people clearly and strongly, and peacefully attacking the British at the proper time. His love of the country and the people was such that he did not wish to lose anything, by methods other than peaceful. He concludes:

It is obvious and certain that the time, circumstances and the benevolence of God are in our support to attain freedom, without any confusion. Why should we follow the path of perplexity in which we might endanger life and property of our countrymen?

Bharati made it clear that "*Swadesamitran*" and himself as editorial writer were not against Gandhiji personally, but were against some of Gandhiji's methods. He wrote clearly that it was a

matter of disagreement between nationalists in their ways of approaching the same problem with the same goals in mind. However, Bharati supported many of Gandhiji's efforts. In 1908, Bharati published a cartoon in "*India*" magazine showing Gandhiji as a cow in the midst of South African officials pictured as wild tigers. In the year 1916, Bharati wrote an appeal to the public, asking them to support Gandhiji in his efforts to effect legislation to prevent Indian people being forced to serve in other countries on contract employment. In the year 1921, a month before his death, Bharati wrote an article in "*Swadesamitran*" urging the necessity of spending more money in propagation of nationalistic ideals throughout the country. He expressed great concern about not wasting the hard-earned money of the people, and spending it properly aimed directly towards efforts to attaining freedom for India.

Bharati realised in the end, before he died, that only Gandhiji could lead the Indian people in their struggle for freedom, and his methods would certainly bring forth the desired results. Though he was greatly disappointed in his own frustrating struggles with the British Government, he still did not lose hope with Gandhian methods of non-violence to attain freedom.

After coming back to Kadayam in May 1919, Bharati sent two verse letters to the Maharaja of Ettayapuram seeking his patronage. "*Chittukkavi*" is a poetic form in Tamil in which the poet describes his own reputation and ability as a poet, and praises the king asking him to reward his poetic talent with patronage and generous gifts.

Bharati was aware of his own poetic talent, and the extraordinary quality of his poetry. He knew that his poetry was translated into other languages such as French and English, and he was rightly proud of such recognition. So, whatever he wrote in the poems to the Maharaja was the outcome of his critical judgement of his own poetry and entirely factual. The response from the Maharaja was disappointing. The poems themselves are examples of Bharati's extraordinary poetic talent, and have an immortal place in the galaxy of Tamil poetry.

Bharati visited places in Chettinad-Kanadukathan and Karai-

kudi, and wrote in praise of the Hindu Madabimana Sangham in Karaikudi. Some photographs with the members of the Sangham have come down to us. Bharati appears in these photographs with his usual black coat, turban, moustache and with a long walking stick.

Though Kadayam was a place well-suited for Bharati's poetic yearning, the people in the village were very backward in many respects. The *Agraharam* where Bharati lived was dominated by Brahmin power, and the Brahmins were against Bharati's principles and actions. He was treated as an outcaste and became too restless to continue to stay in that atmosphere of overpowering prejudice of the people and their meaningless religious customs.

Bharati decided to leave Kadayam, and resumed his life as the subeditor in "*Swadesamitran*" in Madras towards the end of 1920.

Meanwhile, Bharati had been trying to publish some of his works. He wrote a letter to Nellaiyappar on December 21, 1918, on reaching Kadayam after his release from the Cuddalore jail, asking him to come over to Kadayam to discuss the publication of his works. Again in 1920 he sent printed circular letters in English to some of his friends about his plans for publishing his works. The letter which he sent to R. Srinivasa Varadacharya at Madurai makes interesting reading as reflecting Bharati's state of mind at this time :

Om Shakti (in Tamil)

C. Subramania Bharati

Kadayam

28th June, 1920

To,
R. Srinivasa Varadacharya,
Madurai.
Dear Friend,

All my manuscripts---the accumulated labour of my 12 years' exile---have arrived here from Pondicherry. They are to be divided into 40 separate books; of each book I print 10,000 copies for the first edition. This work will cost me an initial outlay of Rs. 20,000.

And, within one year, or, at the most, two years from the date of publication, I shall certainly be able to get a net profit of a lakh and a half rupees.

Most of the works which I have now selected for publication are prose-stories, sensational and, at the same time, classical; very easy, lucid, clear, luminous and all but too popular in style and diction and, at the same time, chaste, pure, correct, epic *and* time defying. This fact and (2) the ever-growing increase of Tamil reading men, women and children in the Tamil land and the Tamils in overseas; (3) the historic necessity of my works for the uplift of the Tamil land which, again, is a sheer necessity of the inevitable, imminent and Heaven-ordained Revival of the East; (4) the novel and American-like improvement which I propose to make in the printing, binding and get-up, of my editions—which, aided by the beautiful and suitable pictures illustrating the interesting events occurring in the stories, will make them a tremendous attraction to our public and such a wondrous surprise; (5) the comparatively low prices of my books; for I am going to sell my prose-works, uniformly at eight annas a copy and my poems at, so far as possible, four annas a copy; and (6) my high reputation and unrivalled popularity in the Tamil-reading world due to my past publications—all these are bound, most evidently, to make my sales a prodigious success.

Please send whatever you can send as loan towards the printing expenses. I expect from you at least Rs. 100. Kindly induce at least twenty more of your friends to lend me similar and much larger sums, if possible.

I shall give stamped Pronotes for the sums I receive from you and your friends, paying the generous interest of 2 per cent per month in view of my large profits. Expecting, very eagerly, your kind reply and scores of money orders from your side and praying to God to grant you a long and joyous life.

I remain,
Yours faithfully,
C. Subramania Bharati

N B.—All Government restrictions against me have been removed and all accusations withdrawn, and so Government officials may also be asked to subscribe for this loan. Nobody's name will be announced to the public in this connection and the subscribers will be merely treated as private creditors. THE DEBTS WILL BE FULLY CLEARED WITHIN 2 YEARS.

C.S.B.

Bharati never had any response to his circular letter sent to his friends; he still did not lose his hope of publishing his works. Again, when he served as sub-editor for "*Swadesamitran*", he printed publicly a notice from "Tamil Valarppu Pannai" consisting of the same details which he mentioned before in addition this time to reiterating his reputation in other countries also. He quoted from "Common Weal" (December 8, 1916) an article written by James H. Cousins about the Belgian poet Verhaeren in which his poems were noticed:

The seeing eye apprehends Beauty not only in the thing seen but *through* it; and the more faithfully the thing is seen as channel and symbol, the more certainly will both it and the seer be dignified, not degraded. Verhaeren came within sight of imaginative freedom; but it is in the poetry of Tagore and Naidu, Ghose and Bharati, and their spiritual comrades of the Irish School that the purest and truest expression of realised Beauty can be found.

This was early in 1921 and Bharati was greatly disappointed to get nothing out of his publishing efforts. Bharati made some arrangements to start a new magazine. "*Amirdham*" from January 1921. He wrote letters in August 1920 to Srinivasa Varadacharya of "*Desabhaktan*" magazine asking him to come over to Madras and collect money for the publication of "*Amirdham*". He was not able to start this magazine either; as there were no sources of income at all for the proposals.

It may be noticed that Bharati who started his literary career as the sub-editor of "*Swadesamitran*" was still in the same position at the point of his death. The destiny of poets, like the destiny of kings, is uncertain indeed!

WHISPERS OF IMMORTALITY

Once again, Bharati's journalistic talents found a lively outlet, as he became the sub-editor of "*Swadesamitran*", for the second time. He wrote on many topics, prolifically on politics, on the problems of Indian society, on the fine arts, and he did some creative writing in the form of short story and poetry. In the later years of life, he took a keen interest in world politics, and he wrote about it with a deep understanding of political science, and a wide knowledge of the historical and cultural backgrounds of the nations of the world on whom he was writing. He was deeply concerned with the Indian freedom movement, as this was his primary ideal. This ideal became the pivotal point, the centre around which international politics wheeled for Bharati.

Bharati discussed the problems of the British Government in its dealings with India, Ireland and other colonies with an eloquence characteristic of Burke. He never hesitated to express whatever he thought was right even if his expressed opinions hampered his career or life.

Bharati's knowledge of the happenings around him, and all over the world was accurate and detailed. As a journalist, who had to deal with international matters, he read almost all the English newspapers, especially those published from England. He discussed in his articles many matters relating to the freedom of India, its economic, political, artistic and spiritual growth, in comparison with other nations, who were caught in a similar predicament.

He argued with the British Government from all possible angles, telling them how it was important and urgent that the British should make India free. In an article entitled Ireland and

India, Bharati elucidated how the great force of *dharma* spreading throughout the world was capable of destroying the evil forces, and that it was important the British should realise the force of *dharma* as the ultimate winning force :

We, Indians, would like to stress this point to Mr. Lloyd George: you have been repressing the spirit of freedom of Ireland for many centuries by raising war again and again. Ireland is a small country. In fact, even now Ireland could be subdued in war by England.

But, because of the great force of *dharma* throughout the world, it has become impossible for England to deny Ireland her freedom.

Ours is a country which was well-versed in *Vedanta* as early as five thousand years ago. It consists of thirty crores of people; even today it leads the civilisations of the world through Jagdish Chandra Bose, and so on. When are you going to grant freedom to India which is incomparable in its glory in the history of the entire world? (July 19, 1921).

Bharati believed that India could lead the world in many respects, for it had the spiritual strength necessary for such leadership, and possessed great qualities as a nation. He thought that the world needed our help both in spiritual and material matters, and so he emphasised the importance of freedom without which the greatness of India will not be revealed. He was also quite sure that the way in which India was fighting for her freedom, the non-violent method, was a spiritual weapon capable of finally serving its purpose. In an article entitled *Swaraijyam*, he compares the various methods by which the United States, Ireland and India fought for their freedom. On July 4, 1775, the United States was freed by declaring war against England and Ireland won by her revolt for freedom. India as was characteristic of her civilised nature employed peaceful, non-violent methods to achieve her freedom. Bharati concludes his article by asking King George V to give India her freedom immediately as it was the only nation which fought through peaceful means.

World War I had a great impact on Bharati as it was the case with leaders the world over. In addition to the consequences which other nations suffered, India had the special disadvantage of postponement of consideration of her freedom. Bharati who had a frisky temperament was annoyed by the sluggishness of the Government in running India's affairs. He suggested to the public in the year 1916, showing them the examples of Ireland and Poland that the Indians too should struggle harder for their freedom, even as the World War was being fought, that hundreds of thousands of people should sign and send an appeal to the British Parliament asking that India be made free immediately. This appeal was dated May 25, 1916.

Bharati was equally concerned with the freedom of spirit of all human beings, and was eager to fight slavery in any form in any part of the world. He thought that the highest civilisation for a nation, or for an individual, was to forsake a life of restrictions. As far as India was concerned, it was in a perpetual state of unrest under foreign rule; while the people led a life of restrictions without any fundamental rights; their inner self like Bharati's must have yearned to be free.

Bharati wanted to build up a world-republic, an internationalism that granted equality to all human beings. He believed that a true republic was established where God was the only Master. He sings of the glory of the nations which enjoyed freedom and democracy, and of the need for destroying slavery in any form anywhere in the world. There was no happier moment for Bharati than when he sang the fall of the Tsar's rule in the Russian revolution and the freedom of the Russian people:

The Might Tsar, as the Himalayas, has fallen.
The conspirators around him who lied through times,
violating *dharma* have fallen in quick disarray.

This fall is as the fall of mighty trees in the forest which are uprooted by the tempest, making of the forest mere firewood.

Life of the people as they themselves order it,
A law to uplift the life of the common man,
Now are there no bonds of slavery;
No slaves exist now.
Kali Yuga, as a ruined wall, did fall,
Krutha Yuga established, reigns in glory now.

His desire for freedom extended from international and national matters to combating common evil practices in society, practised every day by ignorant people. The situation of the Indian women who worked as slave labourers in the Fiji cane fields excited the poet's compassion, and he prayed to *Shakti* for the welfare of these women.

Bharati lived in Thambu Chetty Street when he first came to Madras, and later moved to his residence in Thulasisingaperuma Koil Street in Triplicate. This street is directly behind the Parthasarathi Swami temple. It was a blessing for Bharati to live there as he visited the temple every day praying for spiritual enlightenment. The beach was nearby too, and Bharati loved to walk on the sands in early mornings or late evenings.

Increasingly, Bharati's preoccupation with living eternally, with immortality in this world, increased. He made a trip to Karungalpalayam in Erode during this period, and spoke at the anniversary celebrations of the local library on the possibilities of eternal life in this world. On August 4, 1921, he wrote an article in "*Swadesamitran*" describing his Erode visit, and on the problem of conquering death and living in eternity. In a poem addressed to the god of death, *Yama*, (*Kalanukka Uraithal*) Bharati wrote that he would never let death come anywhere near him, and that he would kick death with his foot should death dare approach him. It may be surmised that Bharati was becoming subconsciously aware of the approach of his own death.

The few months before his death, Bharati was completely pre-occupied with devotional thought, surrendering all of his thinking to *Shakti*. The story of Prahlada who had unwavering faith

in Lord Narayana, who defied his own father and conquered death caused by him held special appeal to Bharati. Shortly before he died, he wrote a poem as a conversation between the wicked father Hiranya and the devoted son Prahlada, a poem of rare faith and beauty. The father threatens his son with all forms of torture, and the son constantly and willingly replies to all threat as *Om Namō Narayanaya*

Bharati's death came about in an unusual manner. He was in the habit of feeding fruit to the temple elephant at Parthasarathy Swami Temple during his daily visit to the temple. On this fateful day, the elephant had a spell of rut, and in spite of advice from bystanders Bharati went close to the elephant in his usual fashion. The elephant pushed him to the ground, and as if ashamed of his maltreatment of a friend, stood completely still. Kuvalai Kannan who heard about Bharati's accident ran to the poet's rescue, and retrieved him from among the four legs of the beast.

Bharati became weakened by the shock of this experience, and was afflicted with a stomach ailment soon after. He passed away on the night of September 11, 1921, fully aware of his death, and dressed in his clothes, the black coat, and the turban.

BHARATI AND AFTER

The People of Madras were shocked to hear the death of their great poet, patriot and humanitarian. The newspapers expressed public grief at the untimely death. Numerous letters from the poet's admirers appeared in the columns of the "*Swadesamitran*".

The fiftieth death anniversary of the great poet was celebrated throughout Tamil Nadu on September. 11, 1971. These fifty years had seen tremendous changes in the history of the Indian people, both politically and culturally. India had finally tasted freedom and democratic government.

In the ever-changing, fast-moving history of India, Bharati's name is imprinted as a national poet, and a devoted son of Mother India. During the fifty years after his death Bharati's name has been heard the world over, and his poetry has come to be translated in many languages, such as English, French, German, Russian and the Czech, besides being translated in most Indian languages. There are numerous cultural associations, and clubs named after him in most parts of the world. In 1948, a memorial building in the name of Bharati and a bust were installed in Ettayapuram solely on public contributions from the people of Madras. Bharati has been honoured by the Government of India, with a memorial postage stamp.

Bharati's works have a long and complicated publishing history. His wife, Chellammal, and her brother, Appadurai, with the help of public donations, established "Bharati-Ashram" and published some of his works, the two parts of *Desiya Githangal*, *Kuyil Pattu*, *Kannan Pattu* and *Bharati Arubattaru* in 1922. The sale of these publications, it must be noted, was far from

encouraging. Chellammal Bharati had commitments in life, the younger daughter to be married and the problems of day-to-day living which surrounded even a poet's widow. In 1924, while the copyright of Bharati's works was still with Chellammal, Bharati's brother, Viswanathan, Harihara Sharma and Natarajan, Sakuntala's husband, started publishing Bharati's works by establishing a new firm called Bharati Prachuralayam. Later, in 1931, the copyright of Bharati's works was sold to "Bharati Prachuralayam" for the astoundingly small sum of Rs. 4,000. Most of the money went to clearing the family's debts to which Chellammal had committed herself for her daughter's marriage. "Bharati Prachuralayam" published almost all of Bharati's works—his *Desiya Githangal*, *Vinayagar Nanmanimalai* in 1929, *Devotional and Philosophical Songs* in 1930, collections of all his poetry and prose and his English writings in 1937. Later in 1941, the complete rights of Bharati's works passed into the hands of Viswanathan as the other two partners of "Bharati Prachuralayam" withdrew from the venture. The Government of Madras bought the copyright of Bharati's works in 1949 from Viswanathan, and Bharati's wife and the two daughters were given Rs. 5,000 each in settlement of copyright. The Government undertook the publication of Bharati's works in 1954, and the copyright has since become the property of the people of Tamil Nadu.

In the world of Tamil literary tradition, Bharati-literature has been a turning point in launching a new era of style in thought and expression. Though Bharati belongs to the age-long tradition of Tamil literature, and limits himself in some places to the conventional banks, his poetry flows with a racing vigour of contemporaneity, gushing with new ideas and emotions. The course of its flow, its speed and manner, its transgressions and its light are totally new, and original in the finest sense of the word. Its impact on modern Tamil literature has been tremendous as it has given life and form to present day writing in Tamil. Particularly, the style of prose and poetry and the way of thinking and feeling of the present literature in Tamil completely and totally belongs to the Bharati tradition. Bharati is thus a revolutionary in Tamil literature, as he brought

new imagination, new techniques in poetry and new ideals in thought.

Numerous scholarly articles, and poems in adoration have been written on Bharati; about a hundred books have been published on his life and works; he has been the subject of scholarly research for the M. Litt., and Ph. D. degrees in universities.

Popular interest has been roused in Bharati's works, and his life. There has developed almost a sense of devotion towards him, elevating him to godly heights. As the poet's grand-daughter, I myself have heard numerous stories, true and false, but imaginative, from all kinds, of people, both educated and uneducated, all stories displaying great affection and devotion to their subject.

For Bharati, life and literature were not separate entities. Poetry was the very essence of life to him, and life, poetry itself. It is rarely that one sees a poet so steeped in the principles of poetry that for him life and poetry merge in a common identity. Bharati considered life a *rasa*. According to him all worldly experiences—emotional, intellectual or spiritual—became various *rasas*, and thus, enjoyable. In one of his essays, Bharati refers to the division of the worldly experiences into nine varied *rasas* which are the products of one *rasa* only, 'the form of Shakti' or 'joy'. To him all of life's experiences were desirable experiences:

This world is sweet; sweet is the sky and the wind.
 The fire, the water and the land are sweet.
 Youth and senility are sweet.
 Saving is sweet; and so is being saved.,
 Destruction is sweet; and so is being destroyed.
 * Consumption is good; and so is being consumed.
Rasa is well; life is well...well.....well.

Bharati's poetry is an example of this *rasa* of happiness. His work also reflects other *rasas* that are the variations of this *rasa* of happiness. Such emotions as fear, sorrow and anger appear in his poetry as the variations of the same *rasa* of happiness. Nowhere do

we find in Bharati's works an immersion in the shallowness of the other *rasas* themselves.

Bharati's attitude towards life was optimistic. He was idealistic. Bharati should be studied through his poetry as well as biography. P. Sri, a prominent Tamil commentator, states how one can get details of Bharati's life from his poetry :

For the poet, the inner life is more important than the external life. This inner life is expressed by a poet only in his poetry. We get a complete picture of Bharati through his poetry alone. When the poet forgets himself and sings in a state of ecstasy, the revealing poetry provides the essence of all his experiences of life. Here and there, we find valuable historical information, particularly many facts concerning his inner life scattered throughout his poetry.

APPENDIX I

Suggested Readings

1. *Bharatiyar Sarithiram* : S. Somasundara Bharati, V. Sakkarai Chettiar, Parali Su. Nellaiyappar, Bharati Prachuralayam, Triplicane, Madras, 1928.
2. *Bharati and His Works*: C. Viswanathan, Bharati Prachuralayam, Triplicane, Madras, 1929.
3. *Kavichakkaravarthi Subramania Bharati Sarithiram* : Akkur Ananthachari, Kittappa Malar Prachuralayam, Chenkottai, 1936.
4. *Pudumaikkavi Bharatiyar* : Thi. J. Ra., Alliance Company, Mylapore, Madras, 1940.
5. *Bharatiyar Sarithiram* : Chellamma Bharati, Shakti Karyalayam, Madras, 1941.
6. *Mahakavi Bharatiyar* : Va. Ra., Shakti Karyalayam, Madras, 1944.
7. *Amaran Kathai* : Thangammal Bharati, Omkara Noolagam, Pudukkottai, 1946.
8. *En Gurunadhar* : Ra. Kanakalingam, Books (India) Limited, 135, Pavazhakkara Street, Madras, 1954.
9. *Subramania Bharati : Patriot and Poet (A Memoir)* : P. Mahadevan, Atri Publishers, Madras, 1957.
10. *Chitra Bharati* : R. A. Padamanabhan, Amudha Nilayam, Teynampet, Madras, 1957.

APPENDIX II

Bharati's Major Works

POETRY

- | | | |
|------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| I. | <i>Desiya Githangal (53)</i> | |
| | 1. Bharata Nadu | 19 (Translation 2) |
| | 2. Thamizh Nadu | 6 |
| | 3. Suthandiram | 6 |
| | 4. Desiya Iyakkappadalgal | 9 |
| | 5. Desiya Thalaivargal | 9 |
| | 6. Pira Nadugal | 4 |
| II. | <i>Deivappadalgal (103)</i> | |
| | 1. Thothirappadalgal | 78 |
| | 2. Gnanappadalgal | 25 |
| III. | <i>Palvagaippadalgal (43)</i> | |
| | 1. Nidi | 3 |
| | 2. Samugam | 8 (Translation) |
| | 3. Thanippadalgal | 15 |
| | 4. Sanror | 9 |
| | 5. Suyacharithai | 2 |
| | 6. Vachana Kavithai | 6 |
| IV. | <i>Mupperum Padalgal</i> | |
| | 1. Kannan Pattu | 23 |
| | 2. Panchali Sabatham | |
| | 3. Kuyil Pattu | |

Poems from *Bharati Thamizh* and *Bharati Pudaiyal* (Vols.I&II)

PROSE

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2. *Patanjali Yoga Sutram*
3. *Vedarishigalin Kavithai*
4. *Githai Munnurai*
5. *Chandrikaiyin Kathal*
6. *Navathandira Kathaigal*
7. *Tharasu*
8. *Kathaikkothu*
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11. *Chinna Sankaran Kathai*
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 Madar
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20. *Translation of Tagore's Short Stories* (Tamil)

APPENDIX III

Important Events in Bharati's Life

1882, December 11	Born at Ettayapuram
1893	Award of the title “Bharati”
1894-97	Hindu College High School, Tirunelveli, Educated up to the fifth form
1897, June 15	Married
1898	To Varanasi
1902-04	Employed at Ettayapuram
1904	Sethupathi High School, Madurai, as Tamil Pundit Employment with “ <i>Swadesamitran</i> ”, Madras
1906	Meeting with Sister Nivedita Editor ‘ <i>India</i> ’ magazine Surat Congress Editing the English magazine “ <i>Bala Bharata</i> ”
1908	To Pondicherry
1910	Meeting with Aurobindo
1918	Courted arrest at Cuddalore
1919	Life at Kadayam Meeting with Mahatma Gandhi
1920	Employed again at “ <i>Swadesamitran</i> ”
1921, September 11	Died at Madras

Subramania Bharati

Subramania Bharati, the great Tamil poet, can be rightfully regarded as the first nationalist poet of India. His poems, with almost visionary quality, pleaded for an integrated India, exhorting Indians to ignore regional and other rivalries and think in terms of 'India'. Mahakavi Bharatiyar is also regarded as a pioneer of modern Tamil poetry. Through his lyrics in *Swadesa Gitangal* (1908) and *Janma Bhoomi* (1909), he popularized the concept of nationalism. His songs and poems are popular even today. This book gives an insight into the life and times of this great son of India.

A fine scholar and literary critic, S. Vijaya Bharati is the grand-daughter of the poet. A graduate of the Madras and Annamalai Universities, she earned her doctorate in 1967 on *A Critical Study of Bharati's Works*. She has numerous articles and two books on Bharati to her credit.

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